

THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND



27/11/2021



27/11/2484732

One Day on Journey Planet

SO, what exactly are we doing here????

That's a difficult question. More difficult than you think, honestly. It comes down to this: one afternoon, I got an idea. Everybody is staying home, there's so much more free time now that no one has to commute. We can make a *Journey Planet* happen by choosing a day and then making everything in that issue in that day! It's a call back to our first issue ever (<https://efanzines.com/JourneyPlanet/JourneyPlanet01.pdf>) and the always fun concept of Fanzine in an Hour!

I had this idea in April of 2020.

I emailed James about maybe actually doing it in November of 2021. There is nothing in the 'verse as difficult as sending an email.

So, I choose a day two weeks out, posted about it here and there, and then... I waited. It was a fun idea, and as soon as stuff started coming in...

...I waited.

You see, I know I SHOULD have been working on the layout the whole time, but I wanted to write. I wanted to read and then write. I wanted to make art, and I wanted, most of all, to talk to people. I had Facebook Messenger chats with a few people, and we did a brief Zoom. I won't be at WorldCon, so this is my chance to actually talk to some of my favorite people.

Like Helena Nash.

And Bob Hole.

And Chuck Serface.

And Sarah Gulde.

And on and on.

The material we got was gold. There are smart and fun reviews, there's an incredible article that strings Flann to Duchamp to Brian Eno. There's weird art, and interviews, and everything I could have imagined we'd get.

True, I slept a lot more than I expected, and had some layout issues, and still, it was a wonderful time that I hope we can do again sometime. I have an idea about 1 day and Music, but that's another email out which might take another year or two to send.

SO, I hope you find this little experiment in panicking procrastination a worthwhile read!

I know I found it a worthwhile 'why the hell not?'

Chris



Journey Planet 60 ~ One Day on Journey Planet

Editors ~ Chris Garcia, Vanessa Applegate, James Bacon

Cover: The House on the Borderland by Auton Purser

Page 1: Editorial by Christopher J. Garcia

Page 2: crafted and photographed by Alissa McKersie

Page 4: Artists New to Me from the 2021 Chesley Award Nominees: Suggestions I Love by Sara Felix

Pages 5, 17, 29, 43, 55, 59, and 62 by Christopher J. Garcia & DeepDreamGenerator

Page 6: An Interview with Steven H Silver

Pages 9, 39, 48, and 52 by Vanessa Applegate and ArtBreeder

Page 10: Flann O'Brien, Marcel Duchamp, and the Problem of the Ready-Mades by Pádraig Ó Méaloid

Page 18: Art by España Sheriff

Page 18 - An interview with Alma Alexander

Pages 20, 25, and 63 by Christopher J. Garcia and ArtBreeder

Page 21: *Slaughterhouse-Five: The Graphic Novel* Reviewed by Christopher J. Garcia

Page 23: Photo by España Sheriff

Page 26: An Interview with Bob Hole

Page 30: Army of the Dead: Viva Las Vengeance at Area 15 by Jacq Monahan

Page 34 – Art by Bob Hole

Page 35: Interview with Marguerite Smith, Discon 3 Vice-Chair

Page 37: Reflections on *The Lost Boys* by Douglas E. Berry

Page 40: Words are flowing out like endless rain into a paper cup (John Lennon, "Across the Universe") by Colin Harris

Page 44: *Night of the Comet* by Juan Sanmiguel

Page 46: Film Review: The Jungle Book (1967) by Bob Hole

Page 49: Five Classic Suicidology Texts by Chuck Serface

Page 53: Footnotes to a Biographical Article Never Written by Steven H Silver

Page 55: Views of Loscon by Various Photographers

Page 59: The Word History of Postal Service in Two Stamps & an Envelope

Page 61: "Did You Hear What Eddie Gein Done?" by Harold Schechter and Eric Powell. Reviewed by Christopher J. Garcia

Page 63: Why, Hawkeye, Why . . . by James Bacon

Page 68: Two Short Shots- Neil Rest and Cynthia Geno

Page 70: Kindness during Covid by James Bacon

Page 78 – Poetry by Ann Gry

Page 79 – Poetry by Chris Garcia

Artists New to Me from the 2021 Chesley Award Nominees: Suggestions I Love

by Sara Felix

In no particular order:

Ejiwa 'Edge' Ebenebe
Danny Schwartz
Amelia Leonards
Marta Witkiewicz
Ashley Hankins

The Chesley suggestions came out late this year, and those and the eventual nominees were the celebration of genre art that I wanted to see after a year that has been hard for many artists. There were a lot of names I expected to see but also some newer names that I was excited to be introduced to. Here are some of the ones that I really enjoyed.

Ejiwa was nominated in the Best Interior Illustration category for their piece in Fiyah Magazine. (https://www.artofedge.com/projects/nYvWX6?album_id=1803763) I love the joy of the piece but overall their color choices are just wonderfully bright.

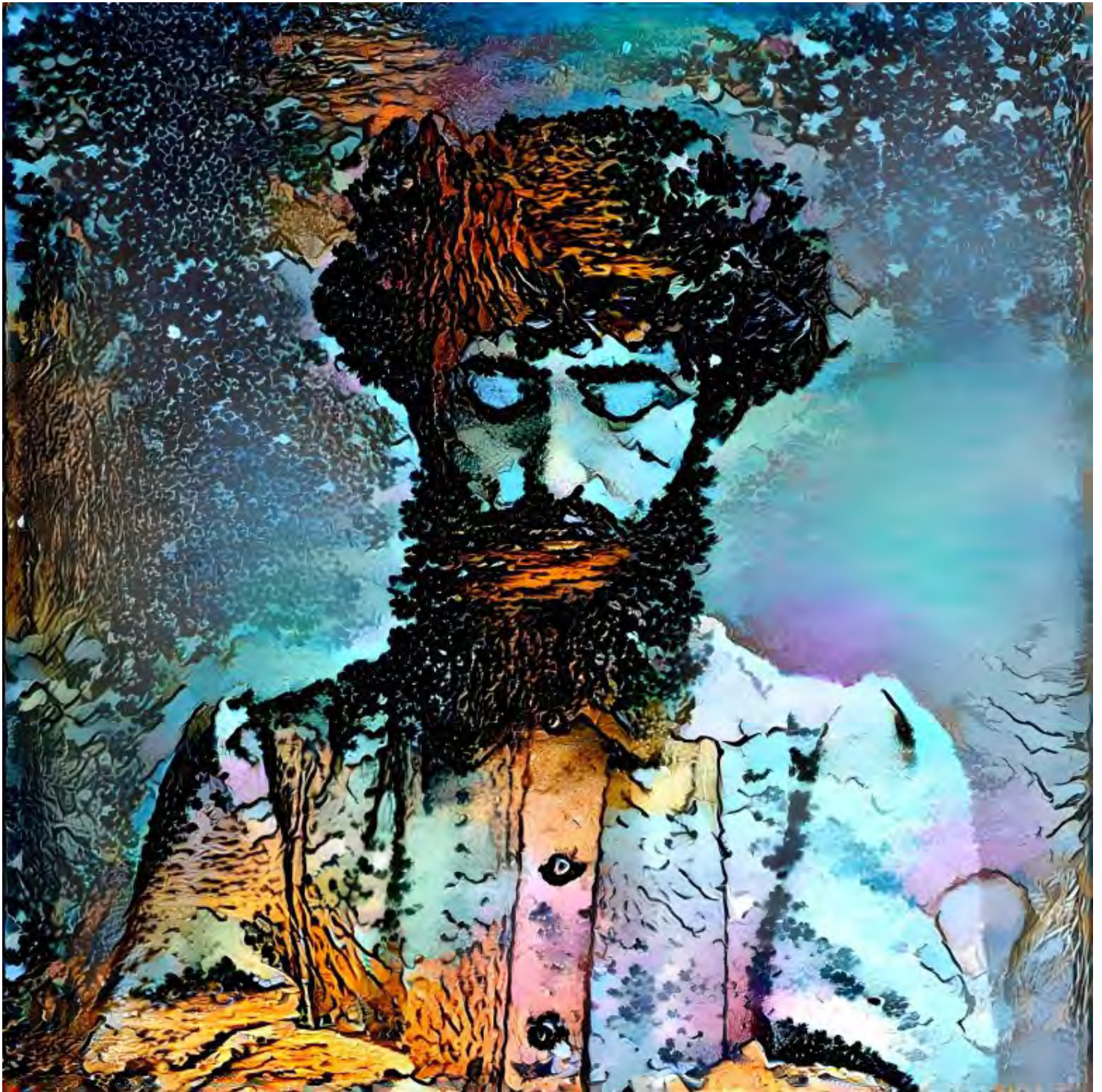
Let me say that the Unpublished Category this year was amazing. The level of art in that group made it hard to choose and I was so happy to see new voices in the category but also in the overall list of the Chesley Awards this year.

Danny Schwartz was nominated in the Best Color Work Unpublished category for the piece "Lily Court." (<http://www.dannyschwartz.com/fantasy/a18cy0buwck2jczmpv9xkp037bz8w2>) I am a sucker for artists with a whimsical style.

Amelia Leonards was nominated in the Best Color Work Unpublished category as well. (<https://www.amelialeonards.com>) I love that wispy watercolor style, but the movement of the piece is just amazing. And the story behind the piece is just amazing. It is a piece of true emotion, release, and escape.

Marta Witkiewicz was nominated in the Best Monochrome Work Unpublished. (<https://martawitkiewicz.com>) Oooh, that graphite work! The delicacy of the lines and movement she has in her pieces is just breathtaking.

Ashley Hankins was nominated in the Best Monochrome Work Unpublished category as well. (<https://www.ashleydoesartstuff.com>) I really love the description she has on her website, Ashley is someone "who loves palettes that feed into both a gothic aesthetic and bright color pops, lots of mood and experimenting with strong, graphic shapes."



An Interview with Steven H Silver

Author of *After Hastings*

STEVEN H SILVER is a frequent contributor to, and sometimes co-editor of, *JOURNEY PLANET*. He's also a helluva writer and had a great novel published—*After Hastings*. It's a look at what would have happened if The Norman Conquest had been repelled, and Anglo-Saxon Britain had prevailed!

OK, *After Hastings* is an alternate history novel, but what about you and ACTUAL Hastings? Has it always held a fascination?

When I was in grad school studying Medieval history, I realized the I was interested in frontiers, but not necessarily physical frontiers, more the frontiers of societal change. At various times, I focused on the transition from Plantagenet England to Tudor England, from Anglo-Saxon to Norman England, and from the *studia generale* to the proto-universities. The Battle of Hastings, of course, is a very specific manifestation of one of those transitions. I haven't been as interested in the battle, specifically, so much as the societal and institutional changes that happened in England as a result of the battle's outcome. Despite several trips to England, as well as studying there in the 1980s, I've never made it down to Hastings or Battle, although I would like to visit the area on some future trip. It just hasn't been as high a priority as other locations I've wanted to visit.

What's your relationship like with Alternate History?

Having been a fan of science fiction and having earned degrees in history, the combination of the two has always intrigued me. In 1994, I reached out to two other fans, Robert B. Schmunk and Evelyn Leeper to see if they might be interested in starting up an award for alternate history (Robert maintains the Uchronia bibliographic website, Evelyn frequently discussed AH on Usenet). The result was the Sidewise Award for Alternate History, named for Murray Leinster's seminal story "Sidewise in Time," which actually isn't quite alternate history, although it features many alternate history features. I've been the award's administrator, as well as one of the judges, for the past 26 years, so I've read quite a bit of alternate history—good, bad, indifferent—during that time.

In addition to that, I've been part of the alternate history apazine *Point of Divergence*, which was founded by the late Jim Rittenhouse (who spent several years as a Sidewise judge). My first published story, "[Les Lettres de Paston](#)" was an alternate history based on the idea that the Angevin dynasty established itself in France instead of England. Set in the early fifteenth century, it tells of a plot to restore the Capetian line to the throne of France. It was originally published in the final issue of the on-line zine *Helix SF* in 2008.

Aside from *After Hastings* and "[Les Lettres de Paston](#)," the only other alternate history fiction I've published has been "The Prediscovered Country," which appeared in Jared Kavanagh's *Alternate Australias* in 2020 and explores a world in which the Chinese Treasure fleet established an outpost in Australia in the fifteenth century. The story is set in 1605 when the Dutch ship *Duyfken* actually did make landfall in Australia. In the story, they discovered a Chinese colony.

Finally, in 2019, I co-edited the original anthology *Alternate Peace*, which invited authors to explore alternate histories which had a point of divergence that was not grounded in battles or violence, as so many are. Over the years, I've gotten tired of reading alternate World War II and Civil War stories, so this was an attempt to move away from those. I was lucky enough to publish stories by Harry Turtledove, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Elektra Hammond, Kari Sperring, and several other authors in the volume.

Tell us about the world that *After Hastings* postulates?

I realized that there are very few alternate histories that use the Battle of Hastings as a branch point and it was an extremely significant point in English history for a variety of reasons. The only other alternate history novel that use it as a branch point, according to Uchronia is John Gribbin's *Timeswitch* (2009). Robert Silverberg, writing as Franklin Hamilton, published the short story "What If—" in 1964. This lack is as if you discovered that there were no alternate histories based on the Battle of Gettysburg.

In my world, William was defeated at Hastings and made a retreat back to Normandy, where he fell ill and gave up his claim to the English throne. Harold worked to consolidate his hold on England, but was stymied when he learned that the Pope refused to acknowledge his claim and continued to support William. Harold elects to reach out to a Scottish monk to put leverage on the Pope to recognize his rule.

England had been converted to Christianity from two directions. In the late sixth century, Pope Gregory I sent Augustine to bring Christianity to England, and he did so, establishing Roman practices on the island. About thirty years prior to Augustine's arrival, however, an Irish monk named Columba brought a Celtic form of Christianity to Scotland. A synod was held at Whitby in the mid-seventh century to try to bring the two forms of Christianity together and resulted in King Oswiu to embrace the Roman version of Christianity. In *After Hastings*, Harold's Scottish monk work with Harold to reintroduce Celtic Christianity (or more accurately, his interpretation of it) to all of England, presaging the English Reformation by five centuries.

What do you think would have been the outcome for the average Briton if the Norman Conquest would have been bungled?

The Battle of Hastings was an extremely significant point in English history for a variety of reasons. It wasn't just the replacement of one monarch with another, as happened when Hardecnut died and Edward the Confessor became king, or even when Cnut defeated Æthelred II. When William became king, he completely reorganized the social structure in England.

There is a story told of the English King Alfred. At a low point in his reign, Alfred took shelter in the home of a peasant woman. The woman asked the king to keep an eye on some loaves of bread she was baking and he allowed them to burn while planning his next steps. Rather than being impressed to have a king in her home, the woman scolded him, explaining, that it didn't really matter to her who was king since it didn't impact her daily life, but burning the bread meant that they would actually suffer immediately. The different between the Anglo-Saxon monarchs who had ruled England prior to the Battle of Hastings and the Norman system established by William of Normandy actually did impact the day to day life of all the English from peasants to the top of the social hierarchy.

Had William not succeeded at Hastings, the lives of the average Anglo-Saxon would have continued the way it had been in previous centuries since the House of Godwin would have simply been a continuation of the various kings of Wessex that at that time stretched back to the reign of Æthelstan (and even earlier back to Ecgberrht).

Are you gonna take us back to this alternate England again?

I've had a couple of ideas for continuations of the story set in 1095 and in the mid twelfth century, and I know my editor would love to see one of those manuscripts. However, there is a tremendous amount of research involved before I can really start writing (especially for the twelfth century story), and I don't currently have access to the facilities I would need, so that one will definitely have to wait. The story in 1095, however, may be one that sees the light of day.

However, I have other books and stories to tell, so no promises that either of these will happen.

And finally, you're a Hugo nominee this year, and the issue you worked on was about Magical Places. What's the most magical place for you if time and timeline were no obstacle?

The lack of time and timeline restrictions make this more difficult to choose. When I wrote about Kenilworth Castle for [*Journey Planet 51: Magical Places*](#), I selected it because of the supernatural feeling I had when I walked through the ruins. It is perhaps the only time in my life that I felt ghosts might actually exist. If my selection of places is opened up by time travel, the feeling of looking for a magical place diminishes by the opportunity to play a temporal tourist.

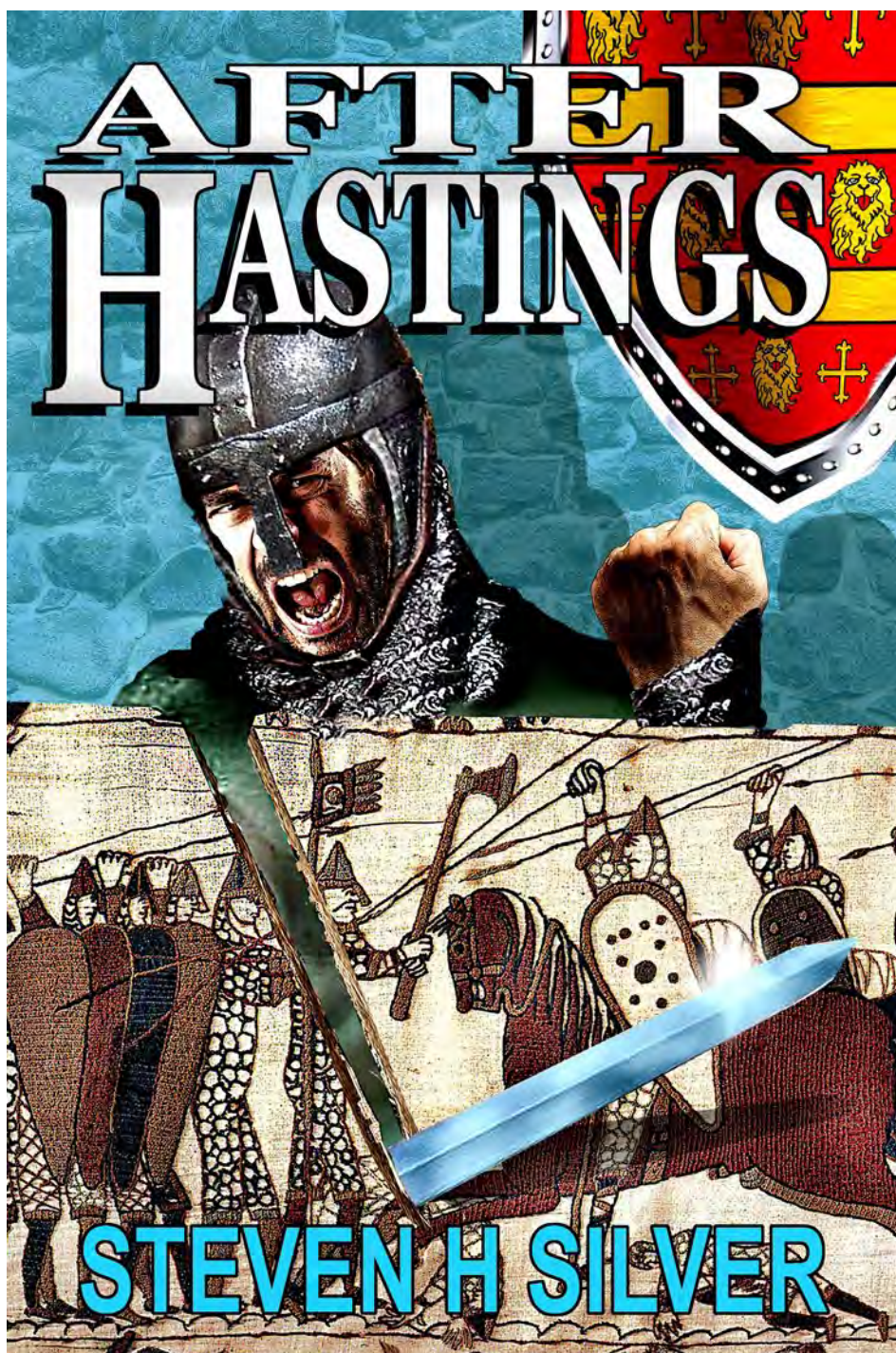
I'll also note that I fully understand how lucky I am to live in the time in which we live, where medicine has advanced to the degree it has and the fact that I am a near-sighted bookish sort doesn't immediately limit my prospects (plus, air-conditioning).

Several years ago, I presented a paper at the International Congress on Medieval Studies on a man named Niccolò de Romanis, who helped establish the University of Oxford in 1214, so as a chronotourist, I would love to drop back to the five years when he was in England to witness what he was doing.

Continuing in the vein of chronotourism, I'd love to be able to see the Beatles playing in Hamburg and the Cavern Club, and perhaps listen to the rooftop concert at Abbey Road.

If time really isn't an issue, traveling to a time when I could walk on the moon or a different planet, or even just an orbital flight at a non-exorbitant cost holds a tremendous amount of appeal to me.

But one of the locations that helped inspire the theme of *Journey Planet 51* was a trip I made to Thingvellir in Iceland in 2017, where the natural majesty of the location was just overwhelming, and the earth is full of places like that which can be visited in the modern age.





Flann O'Brien, Marcel Duchamp, and the Problem of the Ready-Mades

By Pádraig Ó Méaloid



What connects Flann O'Brien and Marcel Duchamp? Quite a few things, it turns out – lost works, wholesale repurposing, and substantial quantities of urine. And there will be brief walk-on parts for Brian Eno, Alan Moore, and Elsa Hildegard Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven (née Plötz). But I want to start with the covers of the Picador edition *The Third Policeman*.

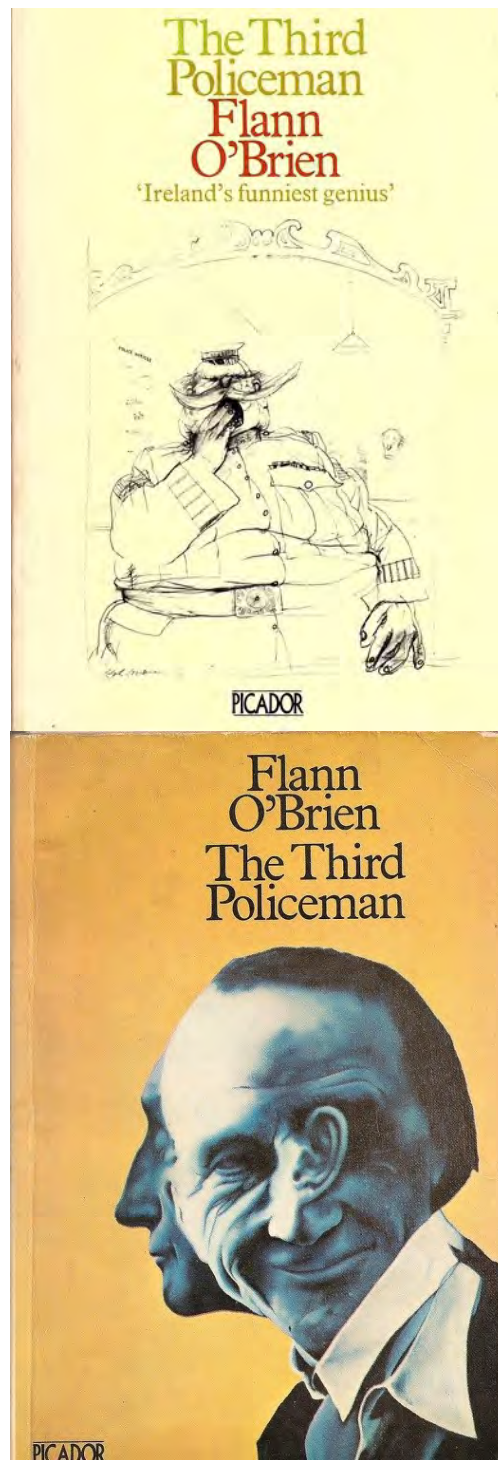
In 1972 Pan Books in the UK launched a new imprint, Picador, 'as a literary imprint with the aim of publishing outstanding international writing in paperback editions only.' Amongst the authors they published was Irishman Brian Nolan, better known to the world these days as Flann O'Brien, and probably slightly less well known as his more prolific journalistic alter ego Myles na gCopaleen. All in all, Picador published five of his books: the aforementioned *The Third Policeman* in 1974, *The Poor Mouth* in 1975, *The Dalkey Archive* and *The Hard Life* both in 1976, and *The Best of Myles* in 1977. Although all five books were

credited to Flann O'Brien, *The Poor Mouth* was actually a (poor) translation from the Irish of *An Béal Bocht*, written as Myles na gCopaleen, and *The Best of Myles* was, as you might imagine, a collection written as Myles na gCopaleen (he would later mutate this name slightly to Myles na Gopaleen, from 1952, but to the best of my knowledge the contest of *The Best of...* all date from earlier than that). To tie all these books together they all have cover illustrations by the brilliant Ralph Steadman.

Except that it didn't start that way. For a brief while there was a different cover to *The Third Policeman*, a reproduction of a painting by Nick Bantock, which depicts a double-exposure of a man's face and shoulders, wearing a white shirt, and simultaneously looking towards us with a smile on his face, and looking towards the spine of the book, with closed eyes. However, by the third impression in 1976 this had been replaced by a Steadman illustration, making it uniform with the other books.

My own first proper introduction to Flann's work was probably in about the mid-to-late 1970s, and I think it's fair to say that these Picador editions, and particularly the publication of *The Third Policeman* in a popular edition, was what helped to bring the attention of the English-speaking world in general, and me and my friends in particular, to his work. It was not until a very few years ago that I became aware of this first version of the cover of *The Third Policeman*, and as recently as this year that I found out its origin. It was based on a photograph by Victor Ohsatz, who had been asked by Greenwich Village photograph and book dealer Michael Freilich to photograph Marcel Duchamp in his apartment on West 14th Street. The resulting photograph, a double-exposure, a copy of which sold for \$18,663 at French art auction house Remy Le Fur & Associates in 2018. If you search the internet looking for information on Victor Ohsatz, though, the only thing that comes up is references to this photograph...

But why put Duchamp on the cover of *The Third Policeman* (or *T3P*, as I shall be referring to in henceforth)? Presumably it is an attempt to illuminate the person of de Selby, the idiot savant – with perhaps the emphasis on the former, rather than the latter – who is the object of the unnamed narrator's obsession, and for whose sake he commits murder. Who chose the cover is currently a mystery to me, although it is possible that Nicholas Royle – whose 2021 book *White Spines: Confessions of a Book Collector*, about his general book collecting, with a strong emphasis on his, frankly, obsession with Picador's publications between 1972 and the end of the 1990s – may know more than I. One thing I can be certain about is that this was not done at the behest of the author, as *T3P* was only published in 1967, the year after his death, because he was so put out by the novel's original rejection by publishers in 1940 that he gave up writing novels in English until 1961, by which time he was long past his best, sadly.



But, besides this perhaps happenstantial connection between Flann and Marcel, what else is there? To start with Duchamp, this time, the thing that he is most remembered for is his Readymades in general, and one particular Readymade, his 1917 work *Fountain*, in particular. A Readymade, as defined in the 1938 *Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme*, in an entry likely written by Duchamp himself, is ‘an ordinary object elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist.’ In other words, the intention of the artist overrides the mere form of the object. So, in the case of *Fountain*, Duchamp took a standard Bedfordshire model porcelain urinal, bought from the J. L. Mott Iron Works, on 118 Fifth Avenue in New York, and, after lying it down flat on its back on top of a plinth, and turning it through 180 degrees, submitted it for an exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists. The society rules were that all works accompanied with the fee of would be accepted from artists, but the work wasn’t put in the show area, but rather hidden from view elsewhere. And after the exhibition the piece was lost, probably discarded as rubbish, a fate that seems to have overtaken several of Duchamp’s Readymades.



Can a urinal be art? Was Duchamp even serious in submitting it, or was he, as it very much were, taking the piss? There is a protagonist in one of Robert Sheckley’s short stories who makes a hobby of causing trouble in restaurants on his holidays, who at one stage says to a head waiter who had refused to seat him because he wasn’t wearing appropriate neckwear something along the lines of, ‘This is not a lady’s scarf. When I wear it, it becomes a man’s scarf.’ Is intention alone the only arbiter of an objects purpose? Have we finally severed the already tenuous link between form and function? If I sit on this table, does it become a chair? Are we, in fact, to leave the realms of sanity behind, and things become what we say they are, simply because we say so?



Let us return to Brian O’Nolan, or at least to one of his other avatars. In Nuala O’Faolain’s autobiographical *Are You Somebody?*, she says ‘I saw Myles na Gopaleen urinate against the counter in Neary’s one night.’ Is it possible that, being in need of relief, he decided that he would allow function to define form, and that we should actually honour that counter as an *ad hoc*, battlefield version of *Fountain*? Surely, if something that is a urinal can become a not-urinal, that a not-urinal can become a urinal? I am certain that de Selby, that Duchamp-manqué, would find that logic flawless.



Another Brian, this time Brian Eno, did attempt to return *Fountain* to its original purpose by urinating in it while it was exhibited in the MoMA in 1993, although the lengths he went to to do so – depositing a few drops of pre-prepared urine out of a tube he had filled in advance – were almost as abstruse as using a painting of a photograph of an artist to represent a fictional character. Here's his account in 1996's *A Year with Swollen Appendices: Brian Eno's Diary*:

I thought, how ridiculous that this particular ... pisspot gets carried around the world at—it costs about thirty or forty thousand dollars to insure it every time it travels. I thought, How absolutely stupid, the whole message of this work is, “You can take any object and put it in a gallery.” It doesn't have to be that one, that's losing the point completely. And this seemed to me an example of the art world once again covering itself by drawing a fence around that thing, saying, “This isn't just any ordinary piss pot, this is THE one, the special one, the one that is worth all this money.”

So I thought, somebody should piss in that thing, to sort of bring it back to where it belonged. So I decided it had to be me.

...each time it was shown it was more heavily defended. At MoMA it was being shown behind glass, in a large display case. There was, however, a narrow slit between the two front sheets of glass. It was about three-sixteenths of an inch wide.

I went to the plumber's on the corner and obtained a couple of feet of clear plastic tubing of that thickness, along with a similar length of galvanized wire. Back in my hotel room, I inserted the wire down to the tubing to stiffen it. Then I urinated into the sink and, using the tube as a pipette, managed to fill it with urine. I then inserted the whole apparatus down my trouser-leg and returned to the museum, keeping my thumb over the top end so as to ensure that the urine stayed in the tube.

At the museum, I positioned myself before the display case, concentrating intensely on its contents. There was a guard standing behind me and about 12 feet away. I opened my fly and slipped out

the tube, feeding it carefully through the slot in the glass. It was a perfect fit, and slid in quite easily until its end was positioned above the famous john. I released my thumb, and a small but distinct trickle of my urine splashed on to the work of art.

That evening I used this incident, illustrated with several diagrams showing from all angles exactly how it had been achieved, as the basis of my talk. Since “decommodification” was one of the buzzwords of the day, I described my action as “re-commode-ification.”

Eno was first of many, as usual. Where he leads, others follow.

But it wasn't even the original *Fountain*, as that was lost (i.e. thrown out) in 1917. But the continued interest in what was, if not the earliest, then at least the most famous, example of conceptual art meant that Duchamp decided to reproduce it. The first full-scale reproduction of *Fountain* was authorized by him in 1950; two more individual pieces followed in 1953 and 1963, and then an artist's multiple was manufactured in an edition of eight in 1964. These mass-produced copies of an already mass-produced item of sanitary porcelain ware are dotted around the world, in important art collections. On 17 November 1999, a version of *Fountain* was sold at Sotheby's Auction House, New York, for \$1,762,500. Not a bad return on an item that would cost you less than 100 currency units, at least in dollars, pounds, or euros. Nice work, if you can get it.



Before we finally drift away from the watery realms of urination in all its multiform glories, let me just mention Eno's first solo album, *Here Come the Warm Jets*, which features as part of its photographic cover artwork a card, the eight of diamonds, from a set of pornographic playing cards, which features a photograph of a lady crouching down, with her back to us, urinating on a beach – LHOQ, indeed. I cannot help speculating, though, that the jet involved in Eno's 'intervention' was more a trickle, and probably a cold one, at that.

Time to move on. On the 24th of September, 2018, myself and James Bacon were sitting in Alan Moore's sitting room in Northampton – this was before he cast me out into the eternal darkness, where at least I have some interesting company – and I read him this extract from a book:

In reply to an inquiry, it was explained that a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham to which the reader could regulate at will the degree of his credulity. It was undemocratic to compel characters to be uniformly good or bad or poor or rich. Each should be allowed a private life, self-determination and a decent standard of living. This would make for self-respect, contentment and bet-

ter service. It would be incorrect to say that it would lead to chaos. Characters should be interchangeable as between one book and another. The entire corpus of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors could draw their characters as required, creating only when they failed to find a suitable existing puppet. The modern novel should be largely a work of reference. Most authors spend their time saying what has been said before - usually said much better. A wealth of references to existing works would acquaint the reader instantaneously with the nature of each character, would obviate tiresome explanations and would effectively preclude mountebanks, upstarts, thimble-riggers and persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature.



– were actually fictional characters of his own devising. In a book that is about a writer writing a book, which is about a character writing a book, whose characters drug him to keep him sleeping, as that's the only time they can act of their own free will, this seems almost logical...

Before Flann wrote *At Swim*, though, he and his friends in University College Dublin, which he attended from 1929 to 1934, were working on another book, to be called *Children of Destiny*. According to his friend and co-conspirator Niall Sheridan's Brian, Flann and Myles in the Timothy O'Keeffe edited *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*:

The most ambitious of all Brian's literary schemes for making money was probably quite feasible, though a little ahead of his time. He called us together in the 'snug' of Grogan's pub in Leeson Street to announce that nobody had yet produced the Great Irish Novel. The time had come when it must

That's Flann O'Brien again, this time from his first novel, 1939's *At Swim-Two-Birds*. The idea of appropriating characters from other books is strongly reminiscent of Duchamp and his Readymades, whilst also being very like the central conceit behind Moore's own *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* series of graphic novels. Moore got around the tricky business of copyright by, at least at the beginning, using characters that were out of copyright – it takes seventy years after the creator's death for a work to enter the public domain, which means that, when the first volume of *League* was starting, in 1999, he was mostly constrained to works whose authors had died in 1929 or before. This did involve a few legal scrapes, at times. If a character he wanted to use was still very definitely in copyright, he just created a version of them that was pretty obviously who it was meant to be, but still managed to just stay the right side of the line, legally.

Flann had a different way of using another author's characters in *At Swim-Two-Birds*: the author, western writer William Tracy, and therefore his characters – mainly cowboys

be written or, rather, manufactured.

This great saga (working title: *Children of Destiny*) would deal with the fortunes of an Irish family over a period of almost a century, starting in 1840. It would illuminate a whole panorama of social and political history – the Famine Years, faction fights, evictions, lecherous landlords and modest maidens, emigration, the horrors of the coffin ships, etc, etc.

Brian proposed that he, [Denis] Devlin, [Donagh] Mac Donagh and I should write the book in sections and then stick the pieces together in committee. At least we'd come cheaper than those monkeys.

A vast market was ready and waiting. Compulsory education had produced millions of semi-literates, who were partial to a 'good read.' So it must be a big book, weighing at least two-and-a-half pounds. We must give it length without depth, splendour without style. Existing works would be plundered wholesale for material, and the ingredients of the saga would be mainly violence, patriotism, sex, religion, politics and the pursuit of money and power.

And the name for this new school or writing? Sheridan adds,

Children of Destiny would be the precursor of a new literary movement, the first masterpiece of the Ready-Made or Rach-Me-Down School.

Draw your own conclusions.

I did say, back there at the start, that I would be mentioning and Elsa Hildegard Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven (née Plötz). So let me say this: there is absolutely not a single shred of evidence, beyond some very loose conjecture, that she was actually the person responsible for *Fountain*. Not a single shred. Which is almost a pity, as then I could probably have spoken about the use of female pseudonyms by both Flann and Duchamp, about how Flann used the unspoken subject of public conveniences for women – which itself he borrowed from George Bernard Shaw – as the political football being kicked around in *The Hard Life*, and the terrible effect drink has on a lively mind.

Let me finish by noting that an early version of a Duchamp Readymade, 1913's *Bicycle Wheel*, consisting of a bicycle wheel mounted on a barstool, would seem to tie together bars and bicycles, both of which feature quite heavily in *The Third Policeman*, which is more or less where we came in.

The original *Fountain* was lost, but its component part, in the singular, was easily enough reconstituted. Flann told everyone, after it was rejected by publishers, that *The Third Policeman* was lost, in various different versions, from being left behind in a taxi, to blowing away, a page at a time, from the boot of his car as he drove across Donegal. This, fortunately, was not true, and his greatest work finally saw publication the year after his death. His was a sad life, and perhaps the saddest thing is that he did not live to see this.

Written by my own hand, this day, 27 November 2021

Pádraig Ó Méaloid

Works Referenced

At Swim-Two-Birds, Flann O'Brien; Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1967

The Third Policeman, Flann O'Brien; Picador, London, 1974

The Poor Mouth, Flann O'Brien; Picador, London, 1975

The Dalkey Archive, Flann O'Brien; Picador, London, 1976

The Hard Life, Flann O'Brien; Picador, London, 1976

The Best of Myles, Flann O'Brien; Picador, London, 1977

Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme, André Breton & Paul Éluard; Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1938

A Year with Swollen Appendices: Brian Eno's Diary, Brian Eno; Faber & Faber, London, 1996

Are You Somebody?, Nuala O'Faolain; New Island Books, Dublin, 1996

Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan, ed. Timothy O'Keeffe, Martin Brian & O'Keeffe, London, 1973

White Spines: Confessions of a Book Collector, Nicholas Royle; Salt, Cromer, 2021





An Interview with Alma Alexander

Ok! I'll start with a simple one - as a kid, was there a book that was everything to you?

Alma Alexander—There were many. The book because of which I taught myself to read at 4 was Heidi. Then came Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales in a lovely, collected volume (I wish I knew what became of that in the many moves...) Then came Pern. Then Came Dune. Then came Amber. Then came Middle Earth. Then came Ursula Le Guin, whom I still want to be when I grow up.

That's a classic path to becoming a writer! When did the writing bug come about? Were you always telling stories?

Yes.. That was the first of of two questions Roger Zelazny once asked me, and I told him I was writing since I could hold a pencil. And before that, I told lies.

People ask me, when did you know you wanted to become a writer? And I find that a nonsensical question. I didn't WANT TO BECOME one. I WAS one.

What were your stories prior to being published like?

Green, but... I can read a story I wrote when I was 10 and I can see there are good bones in it. The novel I wrote when I was 14 is still solid. I may look it over and publish it as "juvenilia" one day... I wrote a novel at ELEVEN. That one, probably thankfully, doesn't survive...

I remember Poul once telling me that a story's bones are what make it great, but the flesh is what makes it attractive and saleable. You wrote a novel at 11! That shows dedication to path. Have you ever wavered?

No I did not waver - and no. Because of the other question that Zelazny asked me. He wanted to know if I read and or wrote poetry and I had to say yes because I was brought up at the knee of a practicing poet grandfather who weaned me on sonnets. And Zelazny said to me, "It shows. You have a voice all of your own. Nobody else will ever write this way." You sent from THAT, you do not waver. You believe, or you die.

I remember finding *Changer of Days* years ago and being drawn to the way you presented characters. Can you tell me a little about how you grow your characters?

Oh, I do not GROW my characters. They come out of the woodwork, peremptorily introduce themselves, and demand I start taking dictation. I was once treated to Chalky from "shifter" sitting on my bed in the small hours of the morning kicking it with his heel and insisting that he did NOT say what I said he said in the book and if he did then he didn't say it like THAT. And the worst of it was he was right, and he wouldn't stop until I fixed it. The little twit.

Also - regarding *Changer of Days* - the 20th anniversary edition just came out in a single volume for the first time, just as it was originally envisaged and written. Very proud of that book. Still, especially now that it's out in the form it was initially conceived as... A very handsome new edition with new cover art and everything—<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1611389356>

It also makes me a writer who is "old" enough to have a "20th anniversary edition" of something. Which kind of blows my mind just a little.

Something I always like to ask writers of series is how they decide to break up their story into individual books. Is it like breaking a stand-alone into chapters, or is there something more holistic?

Well with *Changer* it was being presented by a quarter-million words of epic fantasy by an unknown writer and the publisher yelped, split that puppy. In terms of the series I've done... the *Were Chronicles* aren't a trilogy so much as a triptych, three books as three prisms through which a story is being seen. They form an intrinsic whole, but they each have something that is wholly their own, too, and that is necessary for complete understanding. With *Worldweavers*, I just... wrote. That's the way it came. Each story was an arc, and each arc was a piece of a bigger arc, and in the end the whole thing came together. But I don't plan. I NEVER plan. I sit down and write. I like to put it in terms of, when I write I stick a seed in the ground and I don't know what will come up, a cabbage or a redwood, until the first leaves show. And then we take it from there.

The Were Chronicles, by the way, originated as a short story idea. And then it became a novel. And then three novels. And it is entirely possible there is more in that world to be pursued. *Were Chronicles, Reloaded*.

Let's wrap up with the very standard. "What you got comin' up?"

At this point... hard to tell. It might be a spinoff from "Changer" because Favrin Rashin has long demanded a book of his own. It might be the re-release of the *Worldweavers* books with new covers which has been in the pipeline for a while. It might be the book I just wrote, something along the lines of Joan Didion's *Year of Magical Thinking*, which I just wrote about Deck - the finding him, and the losing him. It may be a new historical fantasy It may be a new thing altogether.

Or it may be nothing for a while.

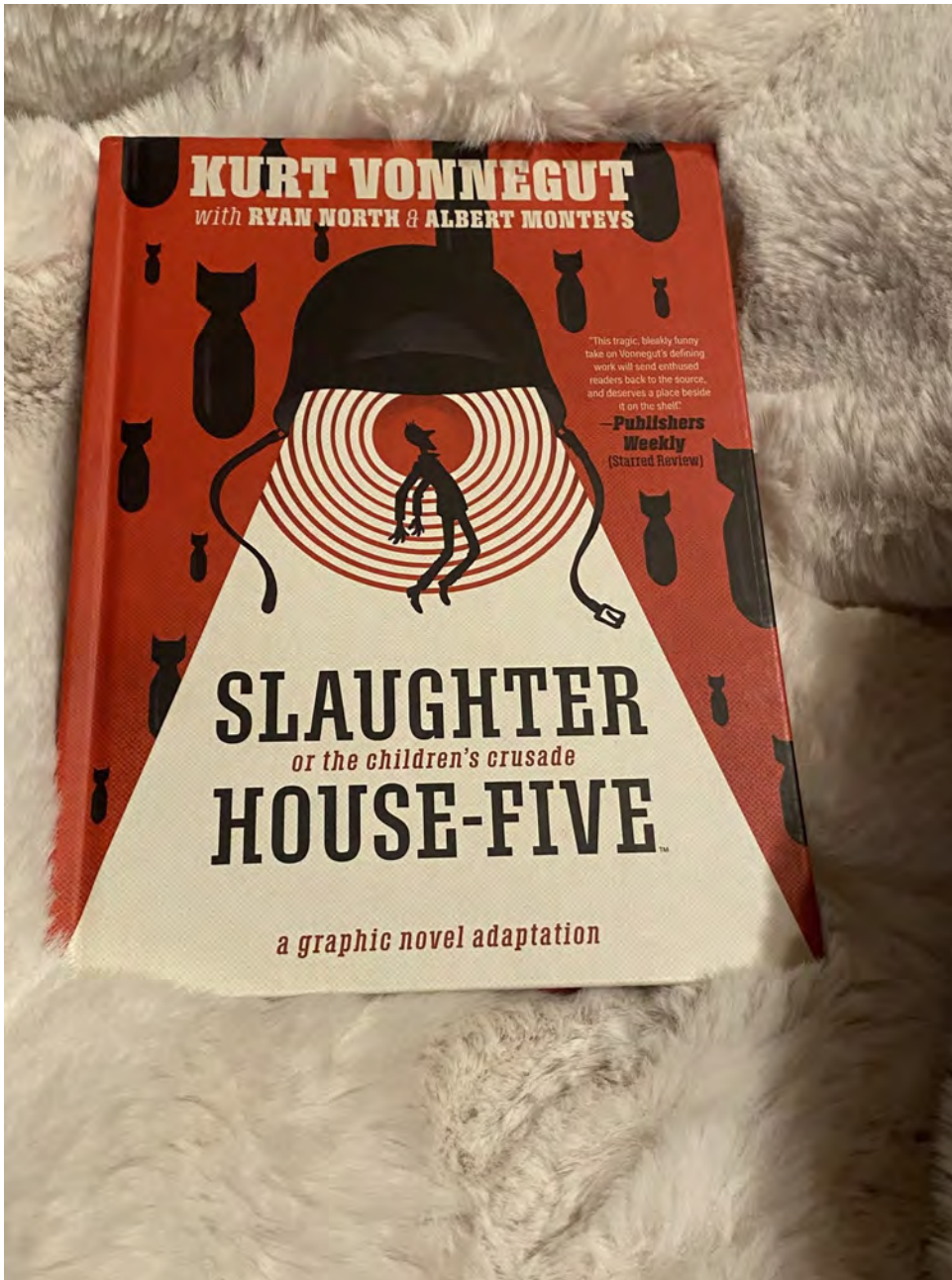
I have to learn to write alone again, after 20 years of living with my best friend, my first reader and my first editor, someone who always saw my work before anyone else did. You could get used to that, and I did. Now I have to learn to trust myself again. On average I've written a book a year in the last 20 years. 2022 may be a year without a new book. The world has emptied me, for a while.





Slaughterhouse-Five: The Graphic Novel

Reviewed by Christopher J. Garcia



As is well-known, Kurt Vonnegut is my favorite writer. His work has informed much of my life, my gentle cynicism, dark moods existing within comic scenarios, and most importantly, the idea of satire as an important aspect of literature. I've read so many of his works over and over, though there's only one of his novels I've ever actually read – *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

That's right. I've never read what most consider to be his most important work. I've read so many of his novels more than five times, most notably *Player Piano* more than a dozen times, but I've never actually read *Slaughterhouse*. Oh, I've watched the hell out of the George Roy Hill movie, it's a near masterpiece, but never read it. So, having purchased the graphic novel, adapted by Ryan North of *Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*, and Albert Monteys, I both knew and did not know what was coming.

Because there was no way you can know what's happening in this graphic novel, and no way you cannot know what's happening.

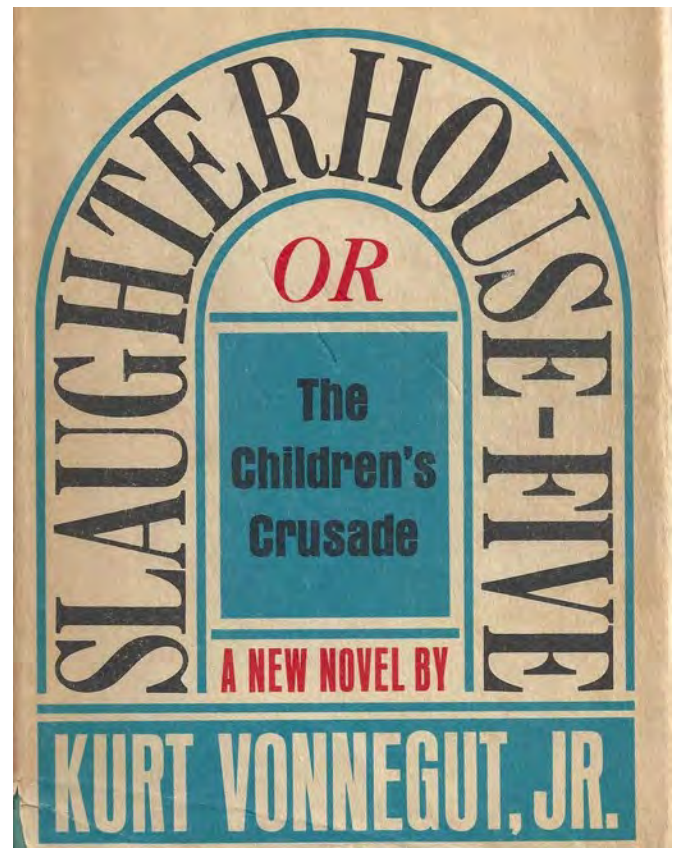
Let me explain. When adapting a great work for a new medium, you must choose from three styles: honor the letter, honor the spirit, or use it as a jumping off point. The first choice is the hardest, largely because it requires taking a concept molded for one medium and bringing it into another. One of the most famous examples of this was the David Lynch version of *Dune*, though I've heard *The Duelists* is another, but I've no way to compare the two. It's incredibly difficult to translate a traditional book to a graphic novel, because the setting of a novel must be described, whereas in a graphic novel, it must be presented. The dynamic between a reader's expectations and conjured world vs. an interpreter's reading and messaging is where the tension between the two forms lay and lay heavy. The spirit of the work is where a lot of adaptations put their weight. A good example is *Nick + Nora's Infinite Playlist*. The film is one of my favorites, and though there are moments when they match, they play more with the spirit, and it works tremendously well. Most, if not all, Batman adaptations fall in this line as well. The jumping off point is, to me, the most interesting. Here, films like *Mean Girls* and *Adaptation* play with the primary concepts, but go in different, and often more powerful, directions.

I would argue that *Slaughterhouse-Five* is the jumping-off-point style, but at the same time, the jumping off point is Vonnegut's sense of being unstuck in time. This is perfect for the graphic-novel medium, not only because of the nature of a comics page, but because of how reflective of becoming unstuck in time can be of actually turning a page.

At the same time, the work is true to the spirit of Vonnegut in general. The difference is, and I mean this as it sounds, *Slaughterhouse-Five: The Graphic Novel* is what we'd have gotten if Vonnegut had grown up steeped in postmodernism.

What? You say, somewhat angrily, though more bemused.

If you look at Vonnegut's work, and from everything I've read about (and written about it, I read multiple essays, articles, and even the Cliff's Notes version) *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a prime example of modernist genre fiction. It uses the tropes of science fiction to tell a deeply personal story of detachment, connection, and fear. There is the tell-tale cynicism of Vonnegut's world view, mixing right along with his humanist take on what we should be as a species. The thing is, Vonnegut didn't have the language to get into the metatextualism that was about 10 years away when he wrote *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Yes, I know there's been metatextual elements in novels dating back to the 18th century, but really, not of the type that writers of the 1980s and 1990s mastered. And a lot of them had Vonnegut in their quiver to begin with. The non-linearity of Vonnegut's story of Billy Pilgrim is one element that easily shows in postmodernist literature, as it forms a sort of non-pastiche. You know exactly what period you're in, it doesn't relate, necessarily, to the thing next to that moment. In essence, the Tralfamadorians, who see time as happening all at once, are the progenitors of the entire-ty of important literary advance in the 1980s and 90s. The first American wave post-Modernist ideals (exemplified by David Salle in painting, and the works of David Lynch, especially *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks*) were based around ideas that Vonnegut presented it, but also took them to a different level. The graphic novel, coming after two more interesting postmodernist waves (one which took the idea of individual form as representative of all form, and therefore reference within reference, arguably the purest form of metatextualism, followed by the wave where translation of tropes outside of their normally applied genre/setting) plays with the ideas that Vonnegut worked with, but more explicitly.





In other words, North and Monteys applied the concepts Vonnegut took on in *Breakfast of Champions* and threw it backwards through Vonnegut's oeuvre to *Slaughterhouse-Five* as conceived by Vonnegut, but the structure they use to turn it into a graphic novel smacks of Vonnegut's 1970s and 1980s efforts, and none so much as *Breakfast of Champions*, with its constant fourth-wall breaking and frequent indications of what's important to the story by calling it out. They use the form to reference works that were in the original as well. The idea of Tralfamadorian books allows for the interaction of the form of the graphic novel, and it works itself in throughout the work, which serves both as a theme and a framework, but it also doesn't overwhelm the story. It works with this idea wherein something we experience as a human is being presented within a format that we're told humans are incapable, or at least less capable, of truly comprehending. That unknowableness plays with many of the ideas that both Derrida and Foucault, but at the same time, it's very much the same idea that Robert Rauschenberg was working with in his late 1960s art. There are symbols that each have a meaning, but they are non-linear in presentation, and often from radically different thought-streams. Applying that idea to *Slaughter-*

House-Five makes me think they were re-constructing what was previously a de-constructed IN this way, we could see it as being what some are calling post-post-Modernist, or metamodernist, but I think it goes a step further.

The entire flow of the story ties itself to the work of Vonnegut, and where it diverges from *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and it flat-out tells us 'we're gonna make some moves', it manages to lay things down that are Vonnegutian, but unlike Vonnegut using them as foils with which to stab at conventions, they are stabbing at the general contradiction that is central to Vonnegut's worlds – that humanity is a bunch of jerks, but they're also the ones making the beauty in the world. The graphic-novel form is perfect to explore ideas of these contradiction by allowing them to exist, side-by-side, and not require them to melt together. A panel can serve a single moment, a single purpose, but it is, at its heart, disconnected from any other panel, even on the same page. A panel can be a closed playground, a walled garden, in a way that a chapter of a novel can be, but the visual expression of a boundary makes the definition so perfect. We're shown three panels to define each of a few characters, and they are used to structurally tell us what they are about. One is three different views of a dude being awesome to kids and family. Another is three panels comprising a revenge story. Now, the difference between these speaks to a big difference in the idea of these characters. They are given the exact space physical space to inhabit, but the way they are used, one moment pulled at random to demonstrate a lifetime, and the other a concerted, clear, well-told story. These speak to a grander idea, as well. That we remember evil as a strong of events, but we remember acts of kindness as momentary definitions.

The reading is engaging, the fact that you will see characters and ideas bounce off one another, but more importantly that ideas often drive-through other, often contradicting ideas. The visual matches the written word, but often that matching is by way of negating, or at least waylaying one another. Taken separately, they have two meanings that make little sense, a Rauschenbergian mash-up of images of a time/place/concept, but taken as a whole, it is the tension between them playing out.

Okay, this has gotten a little out-of-hand. I've gone too far, and now you and I are both now lost, drifting. Let me drag myself back, and you can grab at my ankles along with me.

They call out that they are adapting a novel into a graphic novel (so we've entered *Adaptation* territory) and then they give us fifteen or so pages of off-screen info. This includes background on the novel, Kurt

Vonnegut himself, and some other material, including a beautiful timeline of the life of the fictional Billy Pilgrim.

It's the typical stuff you want from an adaptation, because it recognizes that the two things are of different worlds, and the original fits in the new container. That's a big concept, because you can never fit all of a story in an adaptation, but you also have to contain it within a new wrapper, and they do it remarkably well here. The art style is brilliant, with multiple levels of exaggeration and minimization. The character design is smart, and the backgrounds are clean, and seldom showy. The panels are, for the most part, guttered from one another, the action contained, framed. The format is neither simple nor ornate: it is experiential. You take in each frame as a whole, and all that stuff I talked about before my digression happens, in so form, and we can let each snippet land, land heavily, sometimes brutally, on our conceptional ground.

So it goes.

This is a masterpiece, and one that rewards a reader with all the background in the world, and none. It tells the story, it makes the points, it obscures and celebrates bringing thoughts to life. It is Vonnegut, but more important, it is the Vonnegut of today, not the Vonnegut of the 60s. Bah, you may say, Vonnegut would never go down this path, but I think we saw enough glimpses of this path in his work to know that he'd be at the end of the lane, just a little bit further from this stops, smoking and waiting for the rest of us to catch up.

Mary O'Hare, who was married to his friend Bernard, told him:







An Interview with Bob Hole

Bob Hole has graced the pages of The Drink Tank and Journey Planet several He's a fine writer, a great artist, and one of those people who has just done a little bit of everything. One of those everthings is Stamp Collecting and hosting a podcast, Bob Collects Stamps.

When did you first discover stamp collecting?

Bob Hole: When I was about 8 my paternal grandmother presented me with a cigar box of stamps she had collected as a girl. That's when I got fascinated. Now, unfortunately, I only know where one of those stamps is. That's not quite true, I still have all of them, but there's only one I can still identify as that first box. It's a one cent Benjamin Franklin stamp that has been torn in three pieces. I got it that way. Later, that same grandmother gave me a big stack of postcards to and from her parents, so it became family history too, another of my strong interests.

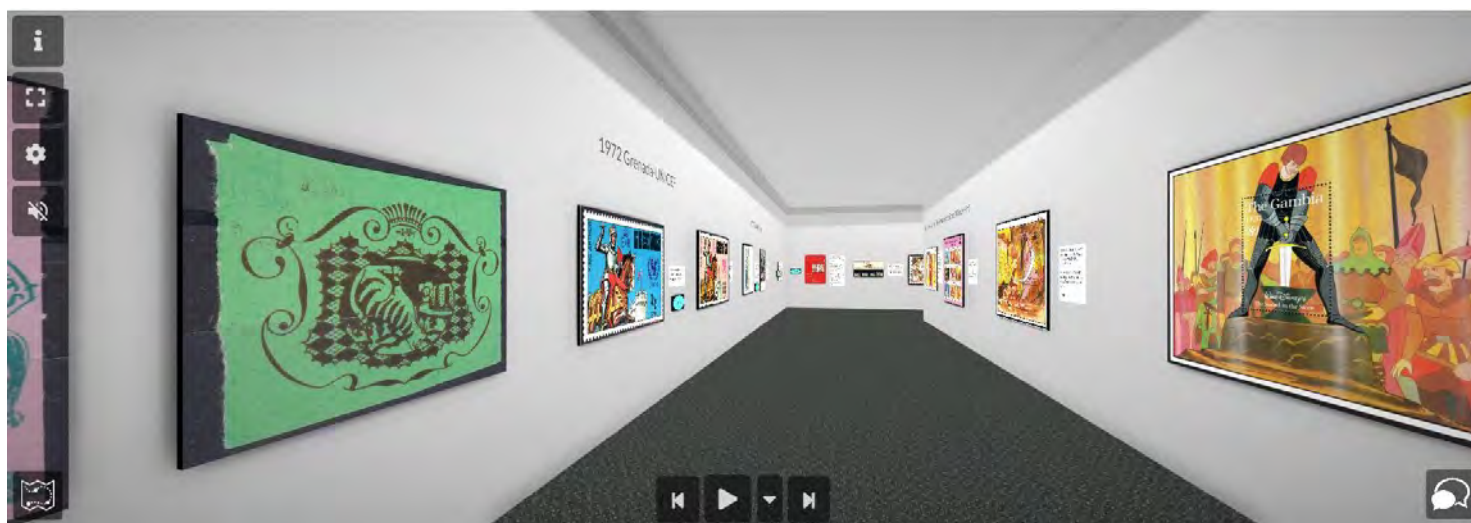


What are your collecting areas? Have any favorite countries or themes? Or thematic countries?

Apparently I've been classified by other philatelists as a general collector, and I'd say that fits pretty well. While I'll collect just about anything, being based in the U.S.A., that makes up the bulk of my collection. Specifically, I'm interested in 3 cent U.S. commemorative stamps. Commemoratives are stamps issued for a limited time, and have special subjects. They're also usually bigger than regular ("definitive") stamps.

Three cents was the basic postal rate from the 1930s until 1959, and there would be up to ten commemoratives issued each year. The first was issued in 1893, as part of a set celebrations the 400th anniversary of the landing of Christopher Columbus. The changing perception of the story of Columbus is now part of the story of those stamps. But I also preferentially collect Australia, and British Africa.

Themes or Topics I collect include birds, focusing on Australian bird stamps, freshwater fishes, and stamps related to King Arthur. At present that's my most complete collection. As far as I know, I have all the Arthurian stamps ever issued. Surprisingly to me the first ones were only issued in the 1970s. That collection is the subject of a couple YouTube videos and a 3D online exhibit.



What's your greatest personal find?

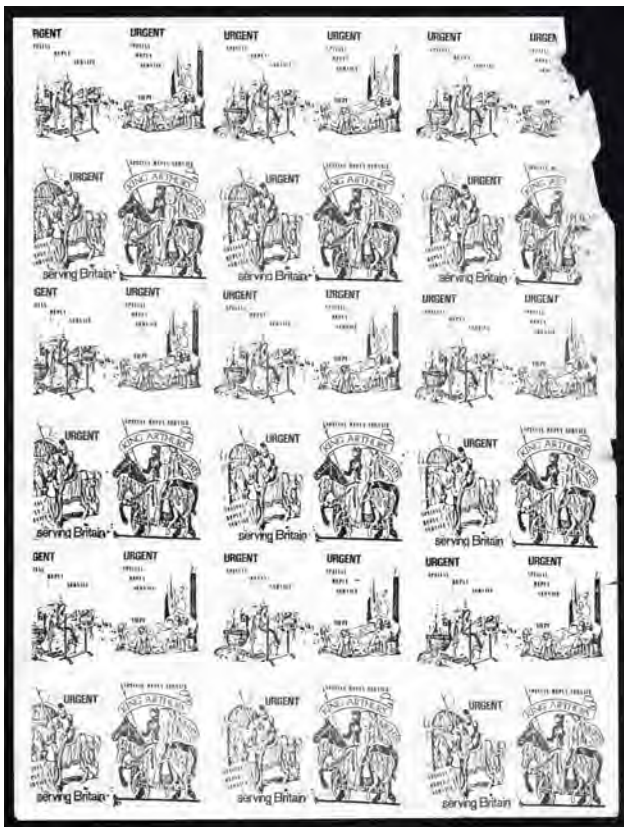
As part of my King Arthur collection, I found some stamps issued by the King Arthur Package Delivery Service. They were like UPS. The stamps were issued in 1971 by the private company when the U.K. Postal service went on strike. Nobody else seems to have any of these. I'd love to find out more about the company and see if there are more stamps out there, but I've had no luck. The company doesn't exist anymore, and I have no willing UK contacts to do a bunch of free archive diving. These were the first Arthurian stamps issued, and "officially" they're not stamps.

You're a museum guy, so I assume you have a museum's organization methodology. Tell us how you organize and arrange!

Ha!

Unlike many collectors I do keep my stamps in stock books rather than albums. And I do try to "display" each stamp as a unique item, even when I have a few dozen. The most of one stamp I have is about 200. Most collectors try to not get duplicates unless they are specifically collecting one issue. I'm collecting them all.

The stock books are arranged right now by country. I'm right now working on incorporating several thousand stamps into the collection, which is expanding it quite a bit. The stock book pages I use are expensive, so that part is slow going.



As I get each country into the stock books, I'm trying very hard to sort them so like is with like. Then I'll eventually go back, fully identify them, and sort them into catalog order or something like it.

There are several catalogs of stamps of the world. The main three are from Germany (Michel company), the UK (Stanley Gibbons company), and the US (Scott company). Like comic or trading card catalogs, they are the supposed arbiters of what is a "real" stamp, what are known variations, and what is not. Of course, they don't always agree. I use the Scott catalog, and my US collection is already identified and ordered by catalog number.

You're also a helluva artist. When'd you start drawing? What kinda art you been doing lately?

I haven't been doing a lot of art recently. Mostly what I'm doing has been collage and photo manipulation. I've also been playing with very simple animation. Most of this has been for the geology museum I work with. I've just picked up Blender, a free 3D software package, and I'm going to try (again) to learn it. I've become more and more interested in the possibilities of 3D and multimedia lately and am trying out several tools for teaching and just fun.

I've been having loads of fun using the Artsteps platform, which is a free 3D thing set up to let artists easily set up multimedia virtual art galleries. It's really cool.

I hear you have a podcast! What's the name and how do we all get to revel in it's joy?

I have three.

You can find the stamp podcast on *YouTube*, *TikTok*, *Blog*, and at bobcollectsstamps.com. You can find the science fiction/fantasy podcasts at bunyipandayotochtli.com. There are two there, *Bunyip* and *Ayotochtli* has classic and new science fiction and fantasy short stories. *Bunyip Bites* is short shorts, including a fair amount of poetry. Each episode has a blogpost.

All three can be found on the big accumulators like Apple and Amazon, etc. search "Bob Collects Stamps", "Bunyip and Ayotochtli" or "Bunyip Bites" on your favorite aggregator and you should find them.

I'm afraid all three have fallen into long pauses right now due to some issues I had to deal with this spring and summer (heart attack), but there will be more of all three soon.

What movie do you put on for comfort viewing?

Lately it's been *My Man Godfrey* (1936) with William Powell and Carol Lombard. I'm a huge William Powell fan, and this is just a lovely, pointless, silly film. I can watch and rewatch it. I can also put it on as background noise and my mind will dip in and out and be able to follow the story. It's Depression Era fluff with some heart, and it just makes me feel good.

And finally, what's coming up next for ya?

A return of podcasts is near term I sincerely hope. One issue frustrating me there is very noisy neighbors at all hours. I'm working on new exhibits on the Artsteps platform. Two I'm working on in particular are on fish stamps, and Dutch 17th century painting (Vermeer, Rembrandt, and others).

I feel I'm going in sixty different directions. Probably because I am. This is good!

Bob







Army of the Dead: Viva Las Vengeance at Area 15

By Jacq Monahan

You are chosen as part of an elite mercenary crew to infiltrate a burning, war-torn Las Vegas Strip. Armed with assault rifles and various weapons of destruction, you attempt to break through miles of zombie-infested, bombed-out streets full of burning, deserted hotels.

Your mission: to rescue survivors from hordes of zombies that swarm over the rubble, snarling and biting and creating more of their kind through infecting the dwindling, human population trapped in Sin City. Failure could cost the lives of hundreds of survivors. Call it a Last Resort fee.

Here's the good part: you are armed and able to shoot as many of these creatures as you can... provided they don't get to YOU first! Aim for the head for a final kill.

You can find this adventure at 'Army of the Dead: Viva Las Vengeance', a virtual reality experience at a secret (sort of) compound on the outskirts of Area 15, an immersive entertainment venue offering art shows, VR experiences, axe throwing & a flight simulator. There, nearly hidden on the grounds of its expansive parking lot, you'll get to try out a groundbreaking VR experience -- based on the fan favorite Netflix film, *Army of the Dead*, produced by Zack Snyder and physically set in Las Vegas - where you will battle zombies in a multiplayer, multisensory rescue mission from inside a heavily modified taco truck.

That's right, a taco truck; and those red splatters on the side aren't from hot sauce.



Taco Trucks of Vengeance

Up to six players team up on this rescue mission, collectively undergoing electronic registration, weapon and nickname selection (your weapon choice affects scoring), VR gear application (wrists and headsets), mission video, roll call, and position assignment. Whew! And you haven't killed even one of the undead yet! Once outfitted and briefed, the truck begins its journey. Motion platforms simulate a rolling movement. You see the sights of a devastated Las Vegas pass before your eyes. There are no windows, just widely spaced bars on each side of the truck, offering unobstructed views of the desolate city, teeming with reanimated



predators of all shapes and sizes, genders, races, and manner of dress. You feel the wind on your face as the battle begins.

These are fast zombies, paradoxically called “shamblers” except that they are as swift as sprinters and approach the truck and its occupants with ferocious speed. Showgirls and Chippendale’s dancers, they ain’t. The iconic, ad-libbed line from the cult classic, *Night of the Living Dead*, sums it up:

“Yeah, they’re dead, they’re... all messed up.”

The truck is continually under siege from hundreds of these creatures, some hurtling through the air and climbing up the sides of the vehicle. Guns blaze from each side and at every angle as the crew begins to

mow down the invaders. Blackish-blood spurts through the air like gruesome fireworks.

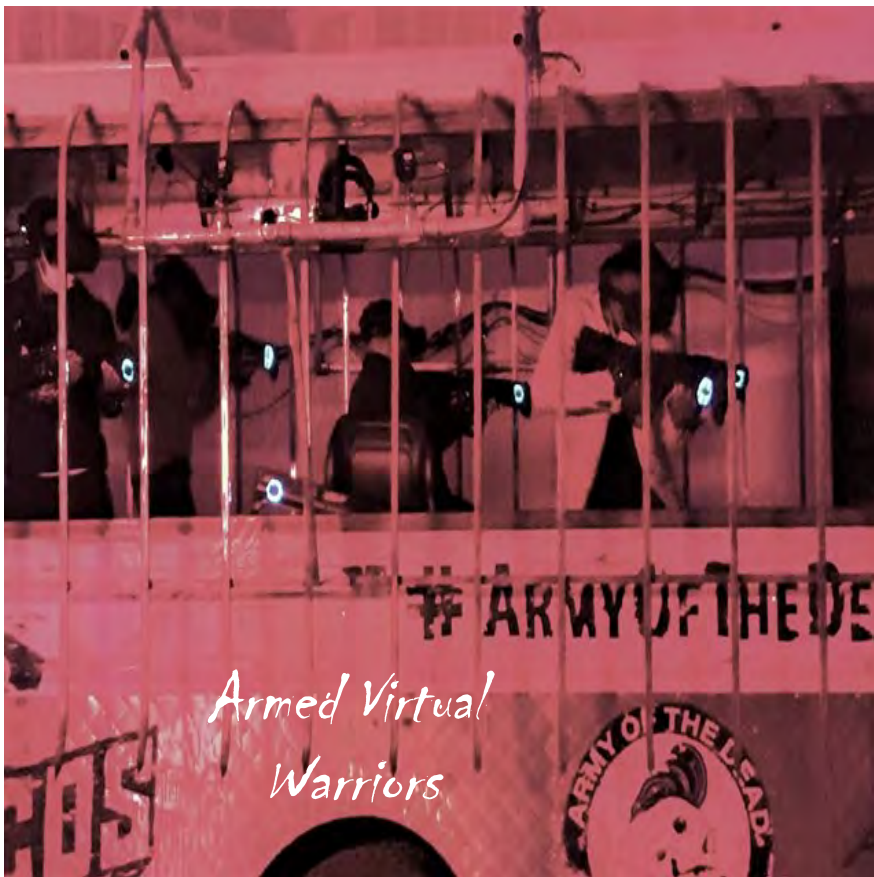
Your truck experiences periodic stops and one unnerving breakdown. You almost never stop shooting and soon you crave the action, welcome the swarm, and get the satisfying sensation of literally blowing zombies away with your impressive fire power. The end of the mission is especially gratifying. Your humble correspondent (Scorcher) became a bloodthirsty mercenary, shooting at practically anything that approached. The team scoreboard at the end of the mission showed that Scorcher had the largest percentage of headshots at 40%.



A gift shop offers t-shirts, hats, and hoodies. Photo ops include the white tiger zombie (from the Zack Snyder film), and a green screen with several different backgrounds to choose from. The pumped-in sound in the merchandise area is LOUD, the decimal level reaching that of a heavy metal performance. The roar of the white tiger zombie alone can rattle glass.

‘Army of the Dead: Viva Las Vengeance’ officially opened in Las Vegas at AREA15 on October 20, 2021, the third US stop for the experience (following New York and LA). There is an admission fee. Think of it as a license to kill.

—Jacq Monahan



*Armed Virtual
Warriors*



Green Screen Photo



Interview with Marguerite Smith

Discon 3 Vice-Chair

As a vice-chair for a Worldcon and a bid we wondered:

What hobbies do you enjoy to escape from your work and Worldcon responsibilities?

I watch people play video games, mostly, but I still take weekly voice lessons and they help me get away from my desk. I also study languages and art when I can get the schedule structure together.

What arts and crafts would you like to spend more time on, and how would you like to develop these?

I would really like to improve my art skills. I find it very hard to get set up with space to practice, though, so in addition to taking more classes I want to rearrange my living space so that I have a pre-set "art desk" for myself.

What Fiction have you enjoyed this year - in any format - and what did you like about it?

Although I grew up as a hardcore reader, most of my fiction this year has been in visual format. Films, games, television shows, and comics, all using spoken/written and visual ways of communicating. I think I've spent the most time with *Critical Role*, an online "actual play" D&D show. This means that the players are all collaborating with the game master and with each other to spin a story that's hundreds of hours long.

What challenges and responsibilities do Vice-chairs face and how do you manage those?

Being a vice-chair is a new challenge. The challenges and responsibilities change depending on the structure. For example, I have specific divisions which are "mine" for DisCon -- we all have ultimate responsibility for all divisions, but there are some where I am the first point of contact and some where the other VC takes that role. In some ways, I find that shared boundary itself was a challenge, as it took us all a while to figure out each other's way of working and whether there were toes to be stepped on.

For Glasgow, on the other hand, I am the only Vice-chair, so those considerations don't apply. In both cases, one of my responsibilities is to protect and support the Chair, whether this means taking on things the chairs cannot do or don't have time for, lending an ear to people who don't want to bother the Chairs, or even reminding the chair that they're only human and need to take breaks too!

You were heavily involved in BWB (Brotherhood Without Banners.) What did you love about that community?

I loved how supportive we were of causes and of each other. Some of the ties I have to BWBers are now 20 years old, or close enough, and we still keep in touch and make sure people are okay.



Reflections on *The Lost Boys*

by Douglas E. Berry

I'm writing this in a hotel room in Santa Cruz, California, a few blocks from the famous Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, first opened in 1907. Going to the Boardwalk has been a rite of passage for Bay Area teens for decades. Making the trip "over the hill" (the hill being the Coast Range) to spend long days enjoying the beach, the rides and attractions at the Boardwalk - and let's be real here, scoring weed - was a big part of my teenage years.

But the Boardwalk is also known as one of the more important settings in 1987's *The Lost Boys*, which is the best vampire movie ever made. I know that's a challenging statement, especially given the long history of vampire films going all the way back to 1922's *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* and including such classics as Bela Lugosi making the definitive mark on vampire movies in *Dracula* (1931), or the even better Spanish-language version filmed at the same time as Lugosi's film using the same sets. Look it up, it's amazing.

But I'm going to make the case that while the *Dracula* defined the modern vampire, it is a definition rooted in Victorian mores and concerns. *Dracula* draining the blood of his victims leaves them pale and listless, similar to the end stages of tuberculosis, a pale beauty also celebrated in *La bohème* and other works of the era. Also, *Dracula* cemented the idea of the noble vampire, a character of means and fine manners. Again, this was a very Victorian take on culture, and allows the threat to grow because a count would never be suspected of such murders!



The Lost Boys subverts that meme and does it in the best way. Set in the fictional town of Santa Carla, the movie follows Michael (Jason Patric) and Sam Emerson (Corey Haim), who, with their newly-divorced mother (Dianne Wiest), are forced to move in with their eccentric grandfather (Barnard Hughes). Michael, a rebellious and sullen teen, soon falls in with a group of dirt bike riding punks who terrorize the Boardwalk. His younger brother

Sam encounters the Frog brothers, self-proclaimed vampire hunters who push horror comics on Sam to educate him about the threat.

I'm not going to go into detail about the plot, except to say that it is both funny and scary at the same time. What really amazes me on every viewing is that while the visuals are terrifying, much of the dialogue is amazingly quotable and funny. It keeps the viewer engaged and interested in the characters.

"My own brother, a goddamn, shit-sucking vampire. You wait 'till Mom finds out, buddy!"

See what I mean? The *IMDb* quotes page for the film is filled with golden nuggets like these. The dialogue keeps the film from bogging down and reminds us that these are kids as the main characters. And what's the worst threat you can make as a younger sibling? Telling mom, of course!

So, we have a well-acted movie that uses beautiful locations and some amazing sets to great effect, and I haven't even mentioned the film's amazing score, filled with some of the greatest artists of the late eighties. That's still not why this is the best vampire movie of all time. So far, it's a great vampire movie; so, what makes it the best?

The vampires.

The Lost Boys is one of the first big-budget movies not to portray vampires as suave, upper-crust types or mindless monsters. No, this movie shows vampires to be what they should be: predators. The vampires in this movie don't seduce their prey, they don't depend on deception or guile. They attack isolated targets and kill to feed. They are predators, and we are their prey. The empathy, the human connection you get in *Dracula* films, is missing here. They are only reasonably kind to Michael because he's a recruit. Everyone else is either potential food or a threat to be removed.

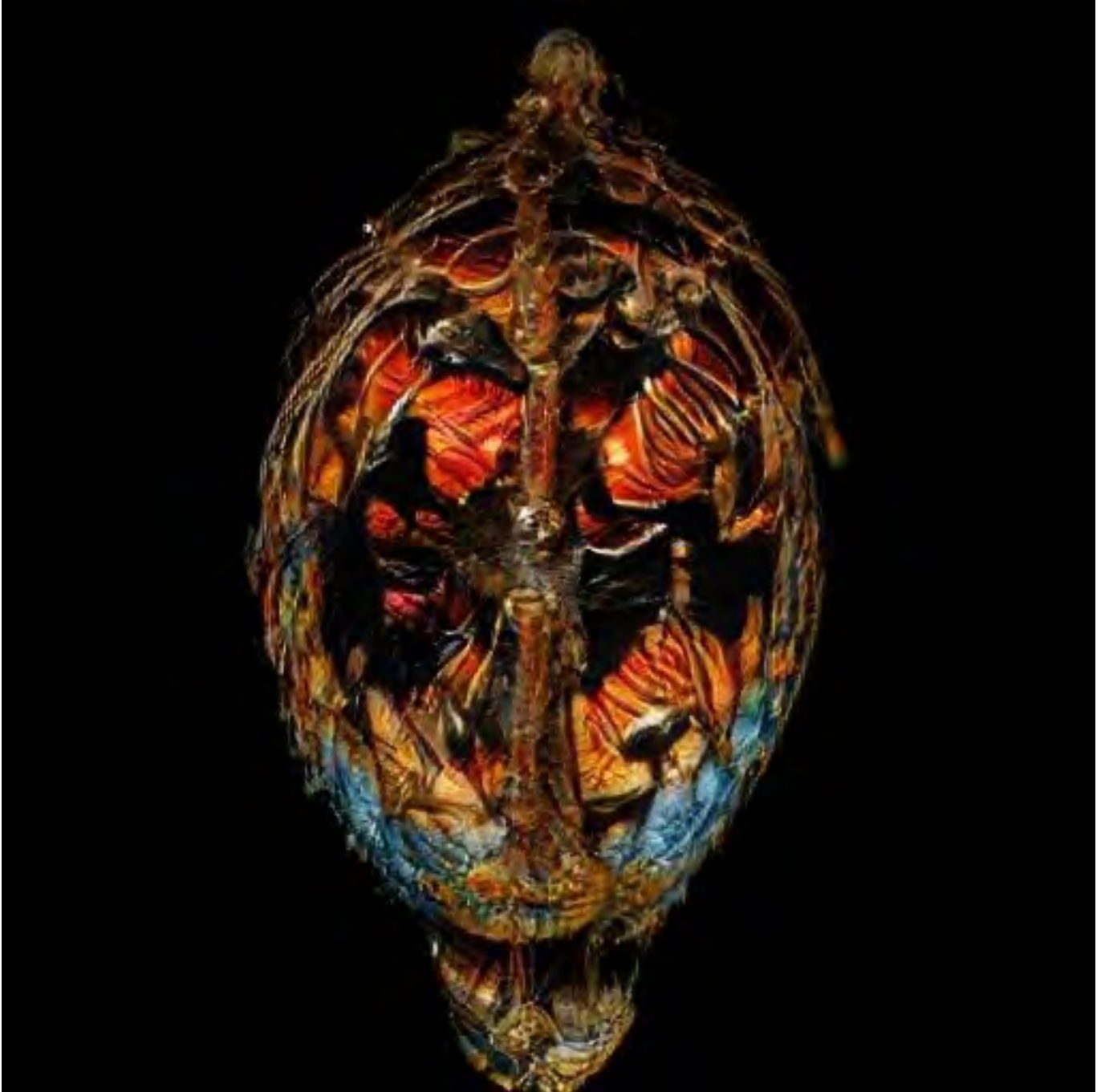
Even in recruiting Michael, they show a sadistic glee in tormenting him, pushing him both physically and with mental games. Until he joins them, he is just another amusement. Kiefer Sutherland's David is a magnificent example of what an immortal hunter would become. He's scary in the way Bela Lugosi never managed. Not even the more blood-infested Hammer films with Christopher Lee managed to portray the casual dismissal of mere humans the way David does. He is a monster. He is an apex predator who cares only for his fellow vampires.

The movie ends with a fantastic battle against the forces of darkness, and not one but two twists. As we fade to the credits, Echo and the Bunnymen's cover of The Doors' *People Are Strange* begins, and it's one of those films you sit through the credits for, not because of the promise of additional scenes, but because it was so good.

Every year the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk has a summer film series, with movies screened to an audience sitting on the beach. The highlight every year is, of course, the night they show *The Lost Boys*. Every year people dress up in their 80s-fashion best for the movie. Cast members have been known to show up for the event. I think next summer we're going to make the trip over the hill to watch this movie with the lights and the sounds of the Boardwalk behind us.

And after the movie is over, we'll hurry back to the car, fearfully looking up to make sure we are not the next items on the menu.

Editor's Note: The back of my head can be seen incredibly briefly in the 2nd comic shop scene walking along with my dad.



Words are flowing out like endless rain into a paper cup

(John Lennon, “Across the Universe”)

by Colin Harris

Throughout my life I’ve been fascinated by attempts to capture a moment for posterity. Time is by its very nature insubstantial and transient; capturing it is the essence of catching lightning in a bottle. Yet there is something in human nature which demands that we try.

At a personal level of course, we do this all the time; every selfie, journal entry, blog, podcast, and ultimately every memory in our heads. But the fascination for me is in grander ambitions, whether driven by practical considerations or merely the artistic. And in the fact that whatever the original intent of the creator, future readers will find their own insights, informed of course by their own context.

Dear Sir or Madam, will you read my book?

I have always been drawn to the idea that science fiction tells us not about the future, but about the present, because the stories we create inevitably reflect the world we live in and the views we hold as a part of that world. (I have a recollection that this idea was developed in Kingsley Amis’s “*New Maps of Hell*” but am no longer sure!)

Equally inevitably, those views are only really apparent to the future reader or watcher, whose distance provides perspective. Even the most insightful creator cannot know which of their imaginings reflect unbelievable (or lucky) foresight, and which will be laughably wrong. Truth, as they say, is stranger than fiction!

The Internet is surely the best example, as so many observers have noted; who would have predicted that sharing cat videos would be such a major use of all that power and opportunity? More mundanely, many pulp stories of the 1940s could not imagine a powerful computer ever needing less than a room full of hardware.

Social changes are equally obvious. The ubiquitous smoking on Gerry Anderson’s *Thunderbirds* is dissonant to us today, yet in 1965 it was not only accepted (to the point that it was natural to include it in a children’s TV show made with puppets), but part of the landscape to the degree that I don’t suppose anyone even considered a future where it might be seen differently.

Roll up, roll up for the mystery tour

One pole when I think of these time capsules is the Domesday Book. At the time a “Great Survey” to support taxation, now it is as much a part of English history as Magna Carta or the maps of John Speed. 935 years old this year, it has become one of the anchors of our history and geography.

900 years after the original Domesday, the BBC sponsored an anniversary project to create a modern up-



Lillian (Lady Penelope's Cook) from Thunderbirds

date, bringing together schools across the country alongside other researchers. The resulting pair of video discs featured 200,000 images, tens of thousands of maps and around a million people. Sadly the data is less accessible now than it was in 1986, although with some effort it can still be seen through the national archives. (<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120116155944/http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/using-domesday>).

2012's *One Day on Earth* (<https://docubase.mit.edu/project/one-day-on-earth/>) was the first globally crowd-sourced documentary bringing together video from thousands of contributors. And while not so specifically time bounded, I was always

been drawn to the Voyager Interstellar Record (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voyager_Golden_Record) – even before I got to work on the mission myself in the mid-1980s. (In interviews, Carl Sagan acknowledged that the real audience for the record was as much the people of Earth as any extra-terrestrials; as with the famous 1968 Earthrise photo, or 1990's Pale Blue Dot, the message of course is that we are ultimately one people sharing one small planet).



Earthrise, December 24, 1968, photo by William Anders

At a more modern scale, we have the classic “time capsule” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_capsule). These seem less popular now but when I was young it seemed to be quite fashionable for town anniversaries and of course for the Millennium. Iconically of course we had the *Blue Peter* time capsules – not just one but five in total, buried in 1971, 1984, 1998, 2000 and 2018. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

[Blue Peter#Time_capsules](#)). Indeed, it was only while writing this piece today that I discovered that there is an International Time Capsule Society (<https://crypt.oglethorpe.edu/international-time-capsule-society/>)! As to the future? The Internet, combined with ever-reducing storage costs, means that our ability to look back – not just at a few points in time but at almost any point in time – is continually expanding. The sheer scale of the Wayback Machine (<https://archive.org/web/>) at over 630 billion web pages is almost unimaginable. In 2014, Google Maps experimented with the facility to look at the way Street View changed over time (<https://maps.googleblog.com/2014/04/go-back-in-time-with-street-view.html>), although I suspect this still only works for a limited number of locations (shame!).

There are places I'll remember

As you will have guessed, I'm a great believer in the value of capturing information for posterity. The more the better, as many things which seem mundane to the writer may be unknown and unexpected for future readers. "The past is a foreign country", as L. P. Hartley wrote in *The Go-Between*.

In terms of science fiction, I have a soft spot for Howard Waldrop's "What Makes Hieronymous Run" as time travellers arrive in the 16th Century to find that Bosch's paintings were not just imagined. But the truth can seem almost as strange. My favourite anecdote here is about our changing sleep patterns; in medieval times (before artificial light) it was common for people to have "first sleep" and "second sleep" with a waking period between (see <https://www.medievalists.net/2016/01/how-did-people-sleep-in-the-middle-ages/> and https://psychology.fandom.com/wiki/Segmented_sleep). References to this pattern start disappearing from the late 17th Century and now I suspect most people would not believe you if you told them this used to be quite normal. What strikes me is not so much that we've lost the pattern, but we've lost the memory that it used to be how we lived. I wonder how many other things have fallen down the cracks between the paving stones of history?

Section titles by Lennon and McCartney, in appreciation of Peter Jackson's "Get Back" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beatles:_Get_Back) which is itself a time capsule.





Night of the Comet

by Juan Sanmiguel

There is a long list of films that I have heard good things about, but I have not seen. Finding time is usually the challenge. A special presentation at the local art house theater, a showing on television, or a film finds itself on a streaming service I am subscribing to provides an opportunity to finally see these films. One film I have recently caught up on was ***Night of the Comet*** from 1984.

Eleven days before Christmas, the world awaits the passage of a comet. Eighteen-year-old Regina Belmont (Catherine Mary Stewart) spends the night with her boyfriend in the steel lined projection room of the movie theater they work at. Regina's younger sister Sam (Kelli Maroney) has a fight with their stepmother and sleeps in the backyard shed. The next morning, Regina finds that the skies are red and there are piles of powder mixed with clothing. She is attacked by a zombie like creature. Regina fights it off and escapes to her house and meets up with Sam. They realize something cataclysmic happened during the previous night. Hearing the local radio station is still live, Regina and Sam go there and find the station is automated. They also find another survivor, truck driver Hector Gomez (Robert Beltran). They use the station's transmitter to try and find help. They are heard by mysterious group of scientists in the desert who seem to know what is going on. Hector goes to San Diego to check on his family while the girls stay put. Can the survivors figure out how to stay alive in this frightening new world? What are the scientists up to? Will the scientists help the survivors?

The film takes itself seriously but allows for moments of levity. It is not relentlessly dreary like ***The Walking Dead***. While waiting for Hector to come back from San Diego, Regina and Sam try on some new clothes at a local mall to tune of Cyndi Lauper's "Girl's Just Want to Have Fun". Sadly, the party is shutdown by some boys who were already at the store and starting to zombie-fy.

The characterization is quite positive. Regina and Sam were raised by a Special Forces father who left them with their stepmom while being deployed in Central America. The girls know how to fight and take care of themselves. They can outfight and outwit the zombies and the scientists. One scientist Audrey White does agree with the plan the rest of her team is following and does what she can to help the girls and Hector. Hector is also competent in the survival department and treats the girls with respect. (WARNING: When the girls are discussing Hector's virtues, a homophobic term is used which was sadly common in the 1980s)

The film was made for under a million dollars. The film makers put their small budget to good use. The underground thinktank headquarters of the scientists is the most ambitious set and it is convincing. The zombie make up is effective and scary. The cinematography conveys the emptiness of the town the girls live in. The strong production values keep you believing in this world. The film shows that a well thought story and good production planning is all that is needed to tell a strong science fiction story.

When the film was made, nuclear war was the biggest worry of the day. There were a lot of films at the time like ***The Day After***, ***Threads***, and the ***Mad Max*** films that had a lot of gloom and doom. It was nice to see a film where there is some optimism and hope. Things we can always use.



Film Review: *The Jungle Book* (1967)

by Bob Hole

The Jungle Book (1967)

Walt Disney Animation Studios & Walt Disney Productions

Produced by Walt Disney

Directed by Wolfgang Reitherman

Starring the voices of:

Phil Harris (Baloo the Bear)

Sebatian Cabot (Bagheera the Panther)

Bruce Reitherman (Mowgli the Man Cub)

George Sanders (Shere Khan the Tiger)

Sterling Holloway (Kaa the Snake)

Louis Prima (King Louie of the Apes)

Clint Howard (Elephant Child)

This was the first movie I ever saw in the theater. It had just been released, and my mom took me on a special trip to a huge movie house in Oakland with a balcony, and that's where we sat.

I don't remember much else, but I fell in love with it then.

I watched it again today, and I'm still in love with it.

It now, of course, has a warning at the beginning because it does use some racial stereotypes. This is particularly true of the voices of the apes, so you need to watch for that.

There is a colonial atmosphere to the piece, with lots of English accents, and positive references to Queen Victoria and the Raj.

The story takes place sometime in the late 19th century or early 20th. It's not really specified. The original stories were written in the early 1890s, by Rudyard Kipling (30 December 1865 – 18 January 1936).

Though this particular series of stories were written while the Kipling family lived in Vermont, the author was a person born in colonial India, and steeped in the rightness of England and Empire, though also a Francophile. He has had many harsh critiques of all of his work regarding his treatment of non-Europeans.

Kipling's Mowgli stories too were the result of colonialism, as they are loosely based on Indian stories and fables. This particular set intrigued Kipling as a child because of its talking animals. This is something that I fervently relate to.

The film follows the story of Mowgli, a human child that is found in the forest by Bagheera, a black leopard, not eaten and fostered by a pack of wolves who also fail to eat the infant. The bulk of the film takes place when the boy turns ten and a tiger that hates humans, Shere Khan, returns to their area of jungle. Then Bagheera and eventually Baloo work to get the kid to a nearby village to be safe with his own kind.

The film is quite beautiful to watch. It is the last animated film personally overseen by Walt Disney, and he pulls out all the stops here, but one.

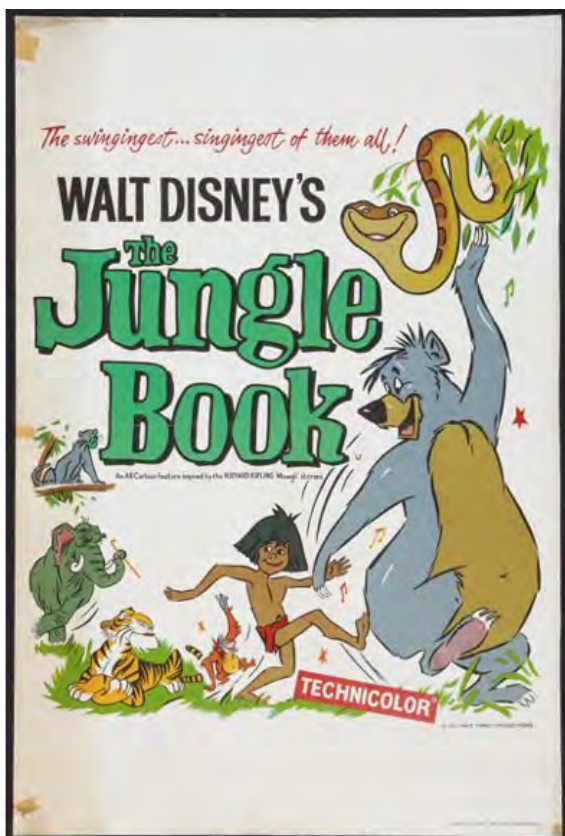
The backgrounds are wonderfully rendered, and the motion camera that the Disney studio invented to bring the special depth to their animated backgrounds work wonderfully.

The voice actors are perfectly cast. Sebastian Cabot, who at the time was just beginning his run as the indomitable butler/nanny Mr. French on the TV show *Family Affair* brings just the right tone to butler/ nanny Bagheera.

George Sanders, one of my very favorite actors, brings a very playful menace to the voice Shere Khan the Tiger. In the original stories he was never so likable and doesn't get away quite so easily as he does in this version.

I want to stop a moment and highlight the animation of Shere Khan. The movement they gave to the tiger was absolutely brilliant. The tiger moves like a tiger. He is perhaps the best and accurate piece of animal animation in all of Disneyana. Watching the movement is watching a tiger.

Baloo, voiced by Phil Harris, is for many the most memorable character in the film. The character brings humor, pathos, and fun to the screen. And most people will recognize his signature jazz song "Bare Necessities" (written by Terry Gilkyson). Even modern kids are getting it if they listen to any Disney related media.



The one character I'm not totally enamored of is King Louie (well voiced by Louis Prima). It's nothing really against him in himself, but this is one where the studio blew it.

First, he's credited as king of the apes. That's fine, but he's the only ape around. Everyone else in his kingdom is a monkey. Monkeys (mostly) have tails, and apes never do.

Second, orangutans do not live in India, let alone northern India where these stories are set. All the other animals shown could have really been at the place and time the movie depicts. They are all pretty good depictions, too. Louie is not.

Third, Louie is actually a female. As an adult male, orangutans have large pads on each side of their face. Louie has the face of a female orangutan.

Putting the second and third of those criticisms together, it has been suggested that Louie was an FTM transgender ape, thrown out of his native lands, and then landed in north-central India where he rose to prominence and power so quickly nobody challenged him in his right to be king.

Works for me. And makes him much more of a fun character. And then he gets the addition of the great song "I Wanna Be Like You (The Monkey Song)" by Robert and Richard Sherman.

Okay, I'm enamored.

The one stop that they failed to make for the film? They did no character art shading. All the characters are two-dimensional flat paintings. This is true even with the otherwise marvelous work done on Shere Khan. With a little effort to bring up the quality of that artwork, I think the film could have been whole groundbreaking, but apparently they just weren't ready for it. To me, this is a sad oversight.

Overall, the film is a great show. The story does not exactly follow Kipling, but is good as it is, and much happier in tone and story.

The ending is not exactly predictable to kids, but that moment that puberty hits is seldom recognized in such a profound and sudden way.

There are two notable *Star Trek* connections in the film. John Abbot voices the wolf leader Akela. He played the council leader Ayelborne of the Organians in "Errand of Mercy" (s1e26, 1967). Also is the part of the baby elephant that befriends Mowgli. He is voiced by Clint Howard, who had just been seen (not heard) as Balok, commander of the Fesarius in "The Corbomite Maneuver" (s1e10, 1966).

And yes, 53 years later, I'm still in love with this movie, faults and all.



Five Classic Suicidology Texts

by Chuck Surface

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States. It's the second leading cause of death for those 15-24-years-old. In 2019, the latest year for which we have data available, 47, 511 individuals completed suicide with firearms accounting for 23,941 of these. The national suicide rate, again for 2019, was 13.9 per 100,000, age adjusted. Males tend to complete suicide while females make more attempts. This relates to method. Men traditionally go for guns, the most efficient means, while women prefer overdoses, asphyxiation, or cutting. But firearms trends are changing year by year. Women are catching up.

White males consistently top suicide rankings, the 2019 rate for them being 26.1 per 100,000 and for nonwhite males 12.2. White women's rate was 7.0 and nonwhite is 3.4.

The latest data available from a 2017 study for LGBTQIA+ youth shows that 39% have seriously pondered suicide while 71% reported feeling sad or hopeless for at least two weeks over the past year. No shock there, since two out of three have revealed others have tried convincing them to change their sexual or gender identities, with youth who've undergone conversion therapy more likely to try suicide than those who haven't. 71% from the study shared having suffered discrimination, while 58% of transgender and nonbinary participants admitted they were not allowed to use restrooms consistent with their gender identity.

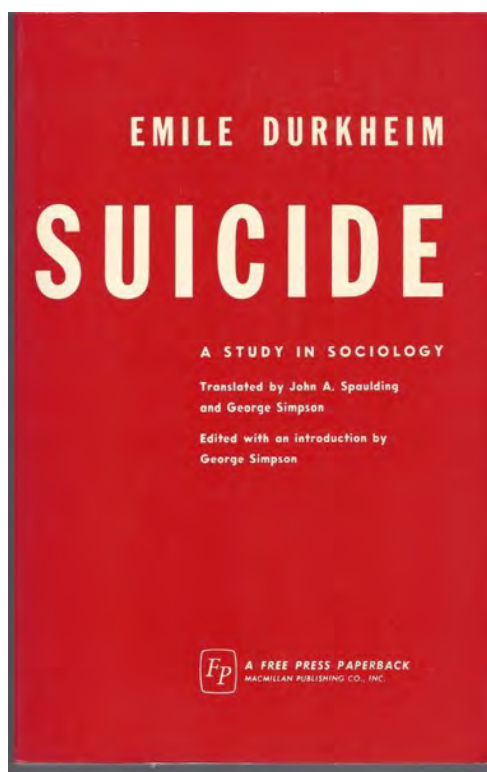
I lifted these statistics from suicidology.org, the website for the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), the national organization that accredits hotlines and services across all states. Interested parties can visit their website for more information, statistics, reading lists, webinars, and other tools designed to educate the public.

As a suicide-prevention counselor, I've been asked why persons kill themselves. There's no easy answer to this question because suicide's a complex phenomenon, one explored by psychologists, sociologists, theologians, philosophers, and, of course, through art, music, and literature. First things first, though. More important than understanding why is knowing what to do if you or someone else feels suicidal. The AAS website offers information on detecting signs of suicide and how to intervene.

Also, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255 where I and other trained counselors are ready to help 24/7.

Why do humans kill themselves? How do you answer such a huge question? Or start to answer? I'm no profound thinker, but I've read several books presenting various theories. The following five are classics either by popular consensus or because they reign so for me. I'll start with Emile Durkheim.

***Suicide: A Study in Sociology* by Emile Durkheim (1897)**



A French philosopher, Emile Durkheim treats suicide in association with society, which is no surprise – he was a protégé of Auguste Comte, the father of sociology. His taxonomy is as follows:

Egoistic Suicide

Egoistic suicides largely are self-centered, since this type of suicide occurs when people lose connection with society, because they've somehow failed to meet social codes or mores. Social revolutions, periods when conventions upon which humanity has relied lose meaning, apply here.

Altruistic Suicide

By killing ourselves, we could save others from suffering. Controversially for me and I strongly suspect for more than one of you, Durkheim discusses Indian sati under this classification. Think about soldiers who throw themselves over grenades to lessen explosive blasts as well.

Anomic Suicide

These suicides relate to sudden changes that upset emotional equilibrium and radically shatter our relationship with society. Today, we define crises as occurrences that pull us from psychological homeostasis and challenge our coping mechanisms, basically anything that cuts us off from the outside world. Deaths,

natural disasters, and financial setbacks might have this effect. And, yes, winning the lottery can trigger anomic suicide if doing so becomes too overwhelming and thus isolating.

Fatalistic Suicide

This involves societal regulations that overly restrict individuality. Durkheim cites suicide among slaves and childless older women for examples. Suicide, then, represents an escape from oppression.

Although he contributed foundational efforts, Durkheim's theory focuses narrowly on sociological elements, eschewing psychological, biological, and idiosyncratic reasons behind suicide. Suicide has multiple causes and facets, and my choices for this list reflect this position.

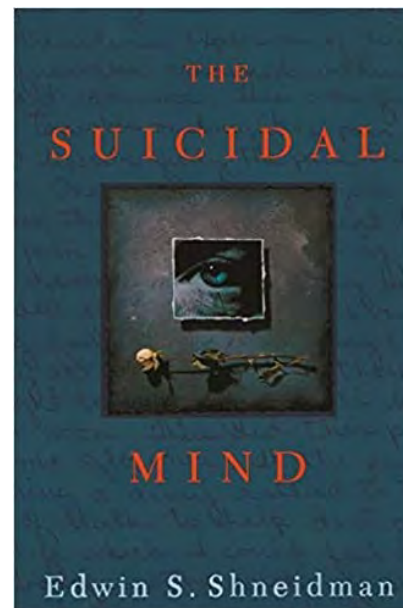
***The Suicidal Mind* by Edwin Shneidman (1996)**

In 1949, Edwin Shneidman was working for the Veteran's Administration, Los Angeles, and his supervisor instructed him to write letters to two widows whose husbands had committed suicide. Upon examining their files, Shneidman discovered that one had written a suicide note. This sparked his curiosity, and over just a few weeks he gathered 700 letters, and so began his life's work.

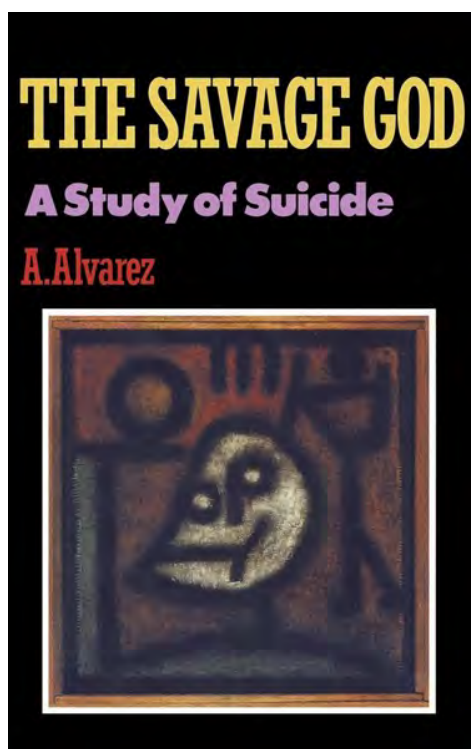
Today we revere Shneidman for not only coining the term "suicidology," but for forming the AAS and with his colleagues Norman Farberow, Robert Litman, and Mickey Hellig inspiring an explosive increase in studies of suicide. His theories have massively influenced how I approach my craft.

For Shneidman, suicide stems from psychological pain, what he calls "psychache." Thwarted or distorted psychological needs elevate suicide risk. Suicide and mental illness overlap because mental illnesses cause perturbation, frustration, unease, upset, and pain. Self-lethality does not necessarily mean mental illness. Psychache is very subjective mental pain that will not go away. As a psychologist and Professor of Thanatology at UCLA, Shneidman instructed that those wishing to help must alleviate that pain to reduce suicide. Trust me, this is easier said than done, but this approach allows for flexibility when trying to understand an individual's attachments and how loss or the threat of loss enhances danger.

I chose *The Suicidal Mind* for this list because it's the most accessible of Shneidman's works. I also suggest *Definition of Suicide* and *Suicide as Psychache: A Clinical Approach to Self-Destructive Behavior*. He dedicates one section from *Definition of Suicide* to analyzing Captain Ahab's monomania in *Moby-Dick*. Ahab, he concludes, suffers from sub-intentioned suicide, an unconscious drive toward death. Can you say Renaissance man? Then you can say Shneidman. That Shneidman was friends with Hershel Parker, a giant among Melville scholars, didn't hurt, however.



***The Savage God* by A. Alvarez (1971)**

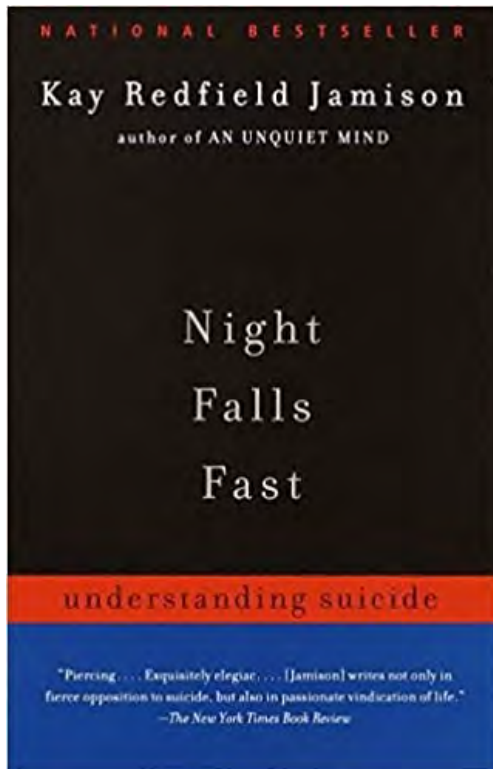


First came Durkheim the sociologist, and then Shneidman the psychologist. Now, A. Alvarez, a writer, poet, and literary critic, enters the discussion. Alvarez refers to suicide as a "closed world," and he says about his own suicide attempt: "I had entered the closed world of suicide and my life was being lived for me by forces I couldn't control." He begins by considering Sylvia Plath and her suicide, and indeed he later reveals much about his own predicament and those of his parents, both of whom attempted suicide as well. Alvarez at junctures reads like an extended Confessional poem, but more about Confessional poetry later when I introduce Middlebrook's Anne Sexton.

Alvarez approaches his subject from literature, art, philosophy, psychology, sociology, religion, and other disciplines to offer a truly multi-disciplinary overview. One passage impacted me:

When neither high purpose nor the categorical imperatives of religion will do, the only argument against suicide is life itself. You pause and attend: the heart beats in your chest; outside, the trees are thick with new leaves, a swallow dips over them, the light moves, people are going about their business.

Night Falls Fast by Kay Redfield Jamison (1999)



Psychologist and Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Kay Redfield Jamison co-directs the Mood Disorders Center at Johns Hopkins University. James herself has bipolar disorder which greatly influences her *Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide*. She notes that suicide rates for Americans under 40 had tripled over the 45 years before her book was published, and like Shneidman and Alvarez she casts a wide net, drawing upon history, anthropology, biochemistry, genetics, and epidemiology.

Given her own mental-health status and that she's a psychologist, we shouldn't be surprised that she emphasizes mood disorders and schizophrenia and their correspondences with suicide. She shares about herself:

I was seventeen when, in the midst of my first depression, I became knowledgeable about suicide in something other than an existential, adolescent way. For much of each day during several months of my senior year in high school, I thought about when, whether, where, and how to kill myself. I learned to present to others a face at variance with my mind; ferreted out the location of two or three nearby tall buildings with unprotected stairwells; discovered the fastest flows of morning traffic; and learned how to load my father's gun. It was not the kind of education one expected to receive in high school.

I attended suicidology conventions during the early 2000s, and this book always generated deep conversations. One contingent found Jamison's statistics a bit alarmist, others felt she relies heavily on medical models, but none could deny that she comes from the heart, from a drive to helping others survive.

Anne Sexton: A Biography by Diane Wood Middlebrook (1991)

The critic M.L. Rosenthal introduced the term "Confessional poetry" while reviewing Robert Lowell's collection, *Life Studies*. Confessional poets employ direct language and present images derived from private experience – emotional breakdowns, mental illness, childhood trauma, and any self-referential revealing are fair game, and overall, their output displays a true break from traditional verse up until that time. During the 1950s and 1960s, Confessional poetry enjoyed huge popularity and poets working within this school included Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, W. D. Snodgrass, and Anne Sexton.

Middlebrook's biography isn't a suicidology text per se but an extremely fine narrative about an award-winning poet, mental-health patient, and eventual suicide. I received this book for my birthday the year it was released amid the controversy surrounding Middlebrook using audio recordings of therapy sessions between Sexton and her psychiatrist, Martin T. Orne. It was Orne who urged Sexton to write poetry toward cathartic ends, and she rode it right into a Pulitzer Prize.

Remember that Edwin Shneidman began his career by examining suicide notes, even bringing the phrase "psychological autopsy" into the professional lexicon. Biographies are important sources for understanding the suicidal mindset. Middlebrook's is one of the best I've ever read. She's thorough but fair, a monumental task. Sexton lived turbulently, and lesser writers might have made an exploitative mess of it. This in the end is a truly compassionate recounting.

The market's flooded with suicidology books, from the scientifically dense to ones intended for general readers. Currently, I'm after my crisis-worker certification from the AAS, which requires that I read several texts about crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and grief counseling. I'm looking forward to what I call the Thomas Joiner Quartet: *Why People Die by Suicide*, *Myths about Suicide*, *The Perversion of Virtue: Understanding Murder-Suicide*, and *The Interpersonal Theory of Suicide: Guidance for Working with Suicidal Clients*. One day, I'll review Joiner's oeuvre separately. Whatever you decide to read or however you answer why people end their lives, know that you're not the only one feeling pain. Some may feel their subjective woes so intensely that they're contemplating a permanent opt-out. But we can face distress together, and together we can persevere.





Footnotes to a Biographical Article Never Written by Steven H Silver

123456789

1—Ellis Worthington-Downs (June 26, 1893 - January 8, 1956) was born in Banbury, England in a small house near the corner of Bar Street and High Street. He immigrated to Ireland after being invalided out of the BEF following the Battle of Loos when he was afflicted by the German's chlorine gas attack. After the Easter Uprising took place, Worthington-Downs made the decision to move to the United States, although he wasn't healthy enough to effect the move until 1918. Even after the move, he continued to suffer physical effects of the gas attack.

2—Miscellany was founded by James Elgar in 1887 to take advantage of the popularity of Frank Munsey's Argosy, although Miscellany never achieved the level of success, or, frankly, professionalism of Argosy. Many authors only submitted to Miscellany after Argosy and similar magazines rejected their work with the result that Miscellany was seen as the "poor man's Argosy." Nevertheless, many authors who were discovered by Elgar and his successor editors eventually did go on to achieve greater success and fame in Argosy, Blue Book, and similar magazines.

3—Jerome Walton (April 1, 1914 - ?) was born in Thunder Bay, Canada in a large house overlooking Lake Superior. His family moved to the United States when he was just a boy and he became a U.S. citizen. He sold his first story to F. Orlin Tremaine (January 7, 1899 – October 22, 1956) at Astounding and continued to sell once John W. Campbell, Jr. (June 8, 1910 – July 11, 1971) took over the reins as editor. Walton grew up reading Worthington-Down's fiction and particularly cited "The Voice That Wasn't Heard" as a story influential in his own decision to become an author.

4—At a panel at Windycon in 2005, Frederik Pohl (November 26, 1919 – September 2, 2013) made the claim that Worthington-Downs collaborated with Walton in 1937 as Worthington-Downs' career as an author was winding down and Walton was on the rise. There is no indication that such a collaboration ever occurred (Pohl believed it was on the story "The Race Is Won," which Walton published in Amazing under the pseudonym "Walford L. Pickering"). Letters found in T. O'Connor Sloane's (November 24, 1851 – August 7, 1940) archive seem to indicate that Walton attributed his inspiration for the story to Worthington-Downs, but wrote it himself, only electing to use a pseudonym because two of his stories were slated to appear in the same issue of the magazine.

5—Worthington-Downs final story, "Never Between Sea or Sky" was slated to be published in the December 1943 issue of Campbell's Unknown, but fell victim to Street & Smith's decision to cancel the magazine after the October 1943 issue. The story never found another publisher and is only known through Campbell's correspondence and a torn manuscript page found in the archives of A.E. van Vogt (April 26, 1912 – January 26, 2000), although it is unknown how the fragment came to be in van Vogt's possession. Sadly, this was Worthington-Downs' only sale to Campbell and represented a breakthrough in his publishing career after 23 years of publishing stories in second tier magazines.

6—Worthington-Downs' last published story was the non-genre "The Geog Gup," which appeared in Boys' Adventure Tales in November 1940. There is speculation that during World War II, Worthington-Downs worked as a printer's devil for the home front edition of Stars and Stripes, but these claims have been disputed by researchers who believe that the lingering effects of his wounds at the Battle of Loos did not leave him with the ability to perform those tasks. In any event, the start of World War II seems to have effectively ended his career as an author.

7—Without any family in the U.S., for Worthington-Downs never married and had effectively cut all ties with his family when he left Ireland, his last thirteen years were spent living on a pension in increasingly squalid conditions. Poul Anderson (November 25, 1926 – July 31, 2001) wrote of seeing Worthington-Downs coming out of a soup kitchen in San Francisco's Tenderloin in the 1950s, although Worthington-Downs did not acknowledge Anderson and it is quite possible that Anderson was mistaken in his identification of the author, although Worthington-Down's last known address was in San Leandro, California, so San Francisco would not be out of the question.

8—Dying a broken and forgotten man, suffering the effects of an attack thousands of miles and four decades away, Worthington-Downs' death went unremarked at the time, but Sam Moskowitz (June 30, 1920 – April 15, 1977) unearthed a possible record of his death on January 8, 1956 in Grants Pass, Oregon, although it is unknown how he wound up in Grants Pass from San Francisco, assuming that Anderson's identification was correct.

9—Eileen L. O'Rourke (b. September 12, 1970) has tried tracking down Worthington-Downs' stories and although she admits she has not been entirely successful, believes that Worthington-Downs published 178 stories during his twenty year active career, averaging just shy of nine stories a year. O'Rourke believes she has identified 107 of Worthington-Downs stories, or about 60% if them. According to O'Rourke, "At times Worthington-Downs approached a journeyman level of writing, but the key to enjoying his work is the ability to embrace the strangeness, almost surrealness of the ideas he is trying to get across. Had he written during the New Wave, he might have found an audience among readers and editors, but he lived and died too soon." O'Rourke also has stated that she believes the strange imagery of Worthington-Downs' stories is directly attributed to the damage the chlorine gas did to him on September 27, 1915.



Views of Loscon



Jude-Marie Green

Ice Cream Social—Not crowded but lots of happy



Steve Frankel

17th Floor Chili party at LosCon. Smallish attendance. Strict vaccine documentation and masks. Not always great on distancing, but everyone is masked and vaccinated. Restaurants are strict, but also not consistent in space for people out. We all came to be enjoying a chance to get out at a fully vaccinated and masked event.

Shot of the evening music show. Enjoyable, but definitely small con this year.





From Nolly



The World History of Postal Service in Two Stamps & an Envelope



Augustus Caesar, 1929, Italy
Sc #215

The first Roman Emperor, Augustus Caesar (lived 63 BCE—14 CE), established the first western postal service. Called the *cursus publicus*, it carried primarily official messages to all areas of the Empire, but could be accessed by at least the wealthy Roman citizen.

The system operated in most parts of the Empire, from the middle east to Britain, but some areas were better served than others. Italy was the main area of operation, of course.

The first adhesive postage stamp was issued by the British Empire in 1840. The 1-cent “penny black” revolutionized the way postal services were paid for. Previously the receiver paid the postage, with the charge often at the whim of the postal carrier, despite regulations. Now the sender paid, and the amount was fixed throughout Great Britain, and later rates were fixed across the Empire.



Queen Victoria, 1840, Great Britain Sc #1

The cover below represents the final frontier in the world postal system. This cover was cancelled in 1934 in Antarctica, the last continent to get any sort of postal service. The Little America Post Office was temporary, but permanent post offices are now located in several places in Antarctica.



Byrd
Antarctic
Expedition II,
1933, United
States Sc#
733, cover
postmarked
“Little
America,
Antarctica”

THIS LETTER HAS BEEN DELAYED FOR ONE YEAR
BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSPORTATION
AT LITTLE AMERICA, ANTARCTICA.



“Did You Hear What Eddie Gein Done?” by Harold Schechter and Eric Powell.

Reviewed by Christopher J. Garcia

True-crime writing has its masters. Truman Capote revolutionized the genre, taking it from sleazy pulp-paper magazines to the bestseller list. Writers like Skip Hollingshead, Ann Rule, Robert Greysmith, and Mark Arax all helped establish the mode of true crime that would be used as the basis for the true-crime podcasting world.

And then there's Harold Schechter.

If Hollingshead is the towering giant focusing on periodicals (*Texas Monthly* being his primary for years) it is Schechter who has focused on historical true crime stuff in a way that few others ever have. His research abilities, coupled with an engaging style and measured pacing. He does not drag things out with exceptional detail; he folds it in and moves along at a clip. It's an impressive task.

The book *‘Did You Hear What Eddie Gein Done?’* is Schechter at his finest, but more importantly, it's the single best exploration of Gein as a human being. It doesn't quite treat him as a ghoul, which could be the best argument against most treatments of Gein, but it's also clear he thinks Gein was a liar, and something akin to a monster. He sees him as a murderer, one who is worse than he presents himself as. It's an interesting take.

The storytelling isn't exactly linear, but largely takes things in chunks that can be applied to a regular path of time. The way the life of Ed Gein is shown works with the art in a very fascinating way. The way that artist Eric Powell works with Gein's evolving character design, making him slightly more off-looking each chapter, plays with ideas of criminal malformation as old as Richard III. The look becomes comical at times, like when he's being questioned about the discovery at his Farm of Horrors.

And that is the key – they tell the whole story.

To tell the story of Ed Gein seems a bit redundant to a lot of true-crime nerds. We know the story. We know *Psycho*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and have heard a dozen podcasts cover it. We know the story, at least as much of it as you can know. Schechter and Powell tell the whole story, and to do that and not lose those of us murder junkies who have encountered this so often, you've got to get into the nooks and crannies while still digging the main vein.

They manage that.

In fact, this is a really interesting form that is actually closer related to true-crime novels than true-crime comics, the master of which being Rick Geary. There are verification notations, which is something I really need to get in the habit of using. There are several moments in the text where the conflict between the reportage and the story are evident, and they call that out. It's a hallmark of true-crime novel-writing, and here it is used exceptionally well. It feels like a novel, but it reads like a comic, and I love that.

The art style is dense. It's not dense with line or detail, but with heavily shaded and blended art that made it feel like pea soup in the way that you want something dealing with the weight of mental illness, abuse, and the most heinous of crimes. It's a completely appropriate style to use with the story.

Even if I wasn't a big fan of Schechter to begin with, I could call out the most important elements to this story. The presentation of Ed, both in word and image, and the way that we're granted both heavy reality and trippy fantastic moments that would not feel out of place in an Alan Moore comic. The most graphic scenes are not sensational but played for actual impact. The most important scenes are given room to exist within their own space, and that is key to a comic like this.



Why, Hawkeye, Why . . . by James Bacon



Broody, moody, quiet, boring, grumpy, that's the Jeremy Renner Hawkeye.

When he is 'roosting up high in Avengers or inconsolable about his wife or Natasha (friends die, remember them well) it just comes across all wrong, a disappointingly portrayal of a fun character, of a character that is actually dreadfully human, full of failings, with a chequered past, and a litany of relationships, turned into a wooden boring lifeless family man character who seems like all the characters Renner plays. Too cool for his own shit.

Like don't the Avengers have Tuesday Tea and Chat or Dance It Out well-being sessions? Like where is the work life balance and the 'I'm Fine' chats? I look at the Hawkeye that Renner portrays and wouldn't let him near a train, let alone a bloody bow and arrow.

I get that Renner's playing the part he has been recruited for, older, with a family, but as comic character portrayals go, it's utterly rubbish. Hawkeye was a carnival performer, originally a villain, he became a key member of The Avengers. A bit of a mess for sure, but not like the socially inept and inadequate character that Renner plays. The Matt Fraction iteration is the best, and here we find an openly honest and hilarious and well, just a real character, a slightly immature scoundrel who ends up dating a lot of girls and is not as organised as one might like, yet relatable and human and a good person.

Renner plays some wooden nuclear family role, and that's not at all in touch. Indeed, in many regards his lack of maturity and ability to deal with emotions, makes him into that manly character that one wants to move away from, that fails to speak, or seek help at odds, say to the likes of Sam Wilson, who helps soldiers with PTSD, or where we are more generally, happy

Without doubt, the best portrayal of Hawkeye was the 22-issue comic run on *Hawkeye* by David Aja and Matt Fraction which was amazing, and has shown that Marvel can produce deep and thoughtful comics. Hawkeye could have been so ropey, especially given the popularity in the Avengers movie, yet Matt Fraction penned a brilliant story, very realistic feeling yet not too grimy and the character, I feel, is much more accessible and realistic than the movie version. The artwork of David Aja has been really nice and is just right for this comic. I liked how the character of Kate Bishop a onetime Young Avenger, gets to play such an important part in this story, and the omnibus edition, if you pick that up, includes their first meeting from an issue of *Young Avengers*. Indeed this comic is readily available in a number of formats. And so worth reading.

Now, in other iterations, Hawkeye and Mockingbird marry (1983) and while Hawkeye has no superpowers, there was a period when he had Pym particles make him Goliath.





Yet, the perfect story, the brilliant portrayal of Hawkeye, is the Aja and Fraction version. There is so much about this comic, it was so current at its time, dealing with real problems, and full of characters who were just great. It was so well set up. And at this time, the best thing I can do is pick up the comics and read them . . .

And there is so much laughter, I forgot the total sense of humour. There is one character, who lives in the flat block that Clint Barton lives in, and he continually calls him Hawkgy, and it felt of the moment.

It starts with Hawkeye falling from a building, noting that, well, he doesn't have superpower, and then in hospital. This period of times feels more real, in between one of the earth-shattering cross comic events, and in scope, takes in quite a lot, but it also benefits from David Aja's artistic style, which begins by utilising the comic frames a little differently, and adding to the images, technical aspects, angles, notations even, and then the purple, the roundel and arrow that features throughout and has been appropriated for the TV series.

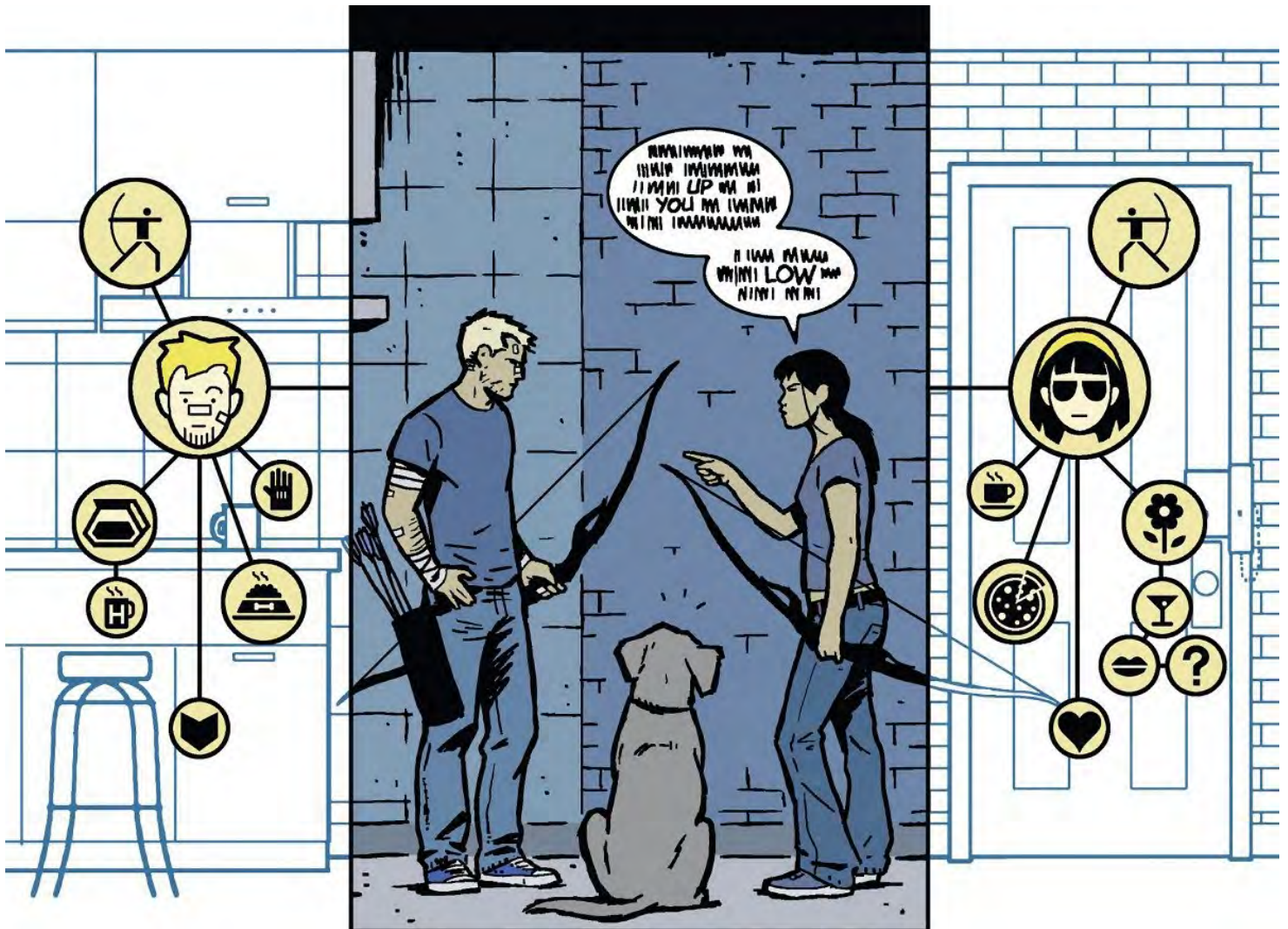
Then of course, Lucky the Pizza Dog shows up, and that is done in a wonderful way, using the comic to tell the story slightly out of order, but in a way that captures the imagination of the reader,

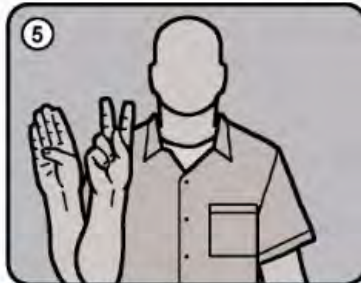
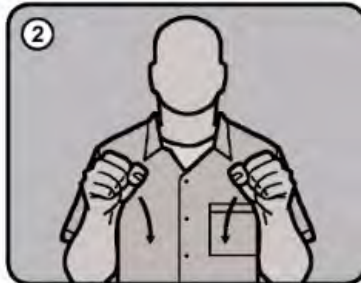
The art is stunning, but the use of panels to just portray the story is uniquely brilliant. One page for instance, a phone call, between Mockingbird and Hawkeye has 24 panels, as we switch between faces talking into the phone, many pages have a panel which is an 'infographic' identifying the type of arrow being fired, and there is a hilarious placement of the classic Hawkeye Head as would have been in the Marvel Logo Masthead, to save Clints modesty. The six days issue is amazing, as we follow clint in the run up to Christmas, again the panels are worked so well, including the backs of the home electronics that Clint is trying to sort out, dates and times, and filling in so much whether it is taking down A.I.M. with Wolverine and Spiderman, or getting a beating from the Tracksuit Mafia. The Winter friends issue makes me laugh, as we follow lucky, a bit, but all in a cartoon kids' style, with some of it perhaps influenced by *Happy Tree Friends*. There is an issue which has romance comic covers, which illustrate the ongoing story so well, and when we have a scene with 4 ladies, all looking side-eyed at Clint.

Issue 11 takes the skill of comic book storytelling to a new level, as we follow Pizza Dog, in 'Pizza Is My Business.' We see everything from his perspective, with smells and visuals identified for us in a unique way that allows us to see what Pizza Dog is seeing and smelling. It is a wonderful story as we follow him and see Clint's world through his eyes. Then there is the 'Stuff what don't get spoke issue' where Clint who is deafened, has to deal with his brother, who is wheelchair bound, and there is use of sign language, and again the panels are utilised in ingenious and clever ways to portray the story, another outstanding issue, and thoughtfully done.

The story is just beyond brilliant, and indeed it was such sadness to see it end. There was a dynamic between Aja and Fraction that is rarely seen, like Ennis and Dillon, Staples and Vaughan, Gibbons and Moore even, it is to that standard, and so enjoyable. There is so much laughter to it. There is such a feeling of design about every page Aja drew, and I should also mention that Annie Wu, Matt Hollingsworth, Steve Lieber, Jesse Hamm, Freancessco Francavilla and Javier Pulido also undertook artistic duties on the series, to give full credit to them.

Yeah, just pick up the comic.





(I know you('re?)
lip reading)
(you can get it back)

(look at ME)



Two Short Shots

But there's a more serious honor. Innumerable white boys have gotten up on stage and said I owe it all to some old black men who never had two dimes to rub together. The Blues Brothers cut them checks. They can tell you and tell you they love you, but cash is uniquely sincere.

Neil Rest

Cynthia Geno on What her Holiday Would Be

Baconmas.

It's after Xmas, but before new year's day. Everyone gives their friends some bacon, so we can all have celebratory meals of bacon in the new year. Everyone has small immediate family meals with bacon at no specified time of day, preferably without changing out of their sleepwear.



Kindness during Covid by James Bacon

There is no denying that those who have encountered Covid 19 have had a shocking time, and indeed, the losses, appalling initially, soon become numbers. A frightening prospect for us, but always something that is close to home. More directly for me in March 2020, were concerns about my 70-year old mom sheltering due to COPD, my Nana at 94 in a care home, utterly isolated, where there were unfortunate losses, and my in-laws, in their eighties, needing support. Occasional Covid assistance was required, and I ended up doing a few odd jobs to help people out. While in work we struggled hard to keep the trainees working towards their goal of becoming train drivers, while time in the cab was prohibited. That struggle was worth it, and astonishingly, 11 of them became drivers during this time of Global Pandemic.

How long ago was March 2020? The year had started well, and I have warm memories of a comic signing by Maura McHugh and meeting Lynda E. Rucker in London, progress was made with Smofcon Lisboa

and there was a site visit, and then the week before the lock down, saw me in Croydon. A lovely afternoon at Croydon Fandom Central with Claire and Mark, and then, I collected 1600+ comics from a Croydon reader who was giving them away., thereafter known as the Croydon Comic Hoard. This was the start of a run of kindness, that I had not anticipated, and which I tried with determination to share.

To Glasgow, and the Commando Comic Swap Meet event and my pal Steve bought 1000 Victors for £40. A bargain, a lovely welcome, and some time with Mark Meenan, and the first Friday Whiskey night with the Dublin 2019 team. Albeit I was in a Bund Halle and drinking my now favourite beer, Schoffenhoffer, listening to an Oompah Music rendition of Star War, but I was with them. Gadi Evron had come up with some ingenuity, he is like that, and so we, the Dublin 2019 committee, or most of us, or some of us, depending on availability started to meet on Friday nights, and by golly, I have had some 6-hour sessions with that gang. Sometimes it is only a dozen committee, sometimes more but it is lovely to chat, free of re-criminations or judgement with a team of good people. Last year I consumed 3 to 4 times my normal alcohol consumption.

Soon, the kindness flowed. As lockdown kicked in, in April 2020, I continued to send letters by post, but increased the amount. Val Nolan from Limerick, well known for his writing mentioned a project, and I asked him to see this work, and soon it was sent to me, and I printed it and enjoyed it thoroughly. I was astounded by Lynda E. Rucker's piece in Black Static, wonderfully capturing thoughts on how people are.

Meanwhile I started mailing comics to Chris Garcia, passed some 500 straight onto Stef in a weird drive-by method on the way to work, which was some sort of cross between railway post and air drops from a Hercules, from the Croydon Comic Horde. You see I had an official letter allowing me to drive to work, but were 500 comics a life or death issue, perhaps not, so I barely slowed down on route and delivery was made.



Some of the hoard was swopped and I made a purchase of Battles and so Battles started to get redistributed, more to Chris of the Garcia Gang, to Steve Dean and also Rich who I cannot recall. Mark Plummer had noted the Victors in correspondence, and so was now interested in Will O the Whistle, an impressive invasion story, with an unexpected history, but where a Steam Train Driver from Wales is part of a British cold war gone hot resistance. Steve had some, and so these were dispatched, and then Vic Whittle, sent the two that were missing and Mark had the run. Vic like many other interactors is a fan on a Facebook group and responded when I asked, and that was like so much. These War Comic Fans, are an agreeable bunch.

Family was important, and so Mom's 70th birthday went virtual, which while nice, was in her own words 'a bit shit' and I love that about mom, her honesty is empathy, things were shit. Fandom also kicked in, and when *Journey Planet* got a Hugo nomination, we were very excited that Ann Gry was now the first Russian fan to be nominated. As before there was some discourse about the importance of recognising fans, but once through that turbulence, it was a lovely recognition. Yet also, there would be no Eastercon. The impatience of fans was palpable, and of course difficulties ensued, yet the con was cancelled.

Post continued outwards, to the nieces and nephews, to all those in my address book, with frequency to CFC and of course home to family, often stuffed with small things. I used stamps as decorations, and indicated clear thanks to all postal services involved. As I went in and out to Paddington it was eerie, strange. Monday morning at 8.30am in April was unreal, no one at the tube stations, the station itself deserted. I have been in the station hundreds of times when it is like this, 1am or 5am, but never at 8.30am. I wandered and took it in.

I missed out on comics, well, I had ordered Action 2020 via the Rebellion website and it never showed up, I waited and waited, and then I sent as nice an email as I could, and received a lovely response, and a refund...

A refund. That was not really what I wanted, but the post was in utter disarray, as were lots of things, I could appreciate it, and appreciated the post people doing their solid work. Letters to the USA were taking time, longer than ever, and many depots were faced with shortages, and in those early months, it was hard. Anyhow, I said on a Facebook group, what had occurred, and a fellow member said, 'would you like a spare', and sent it to me, no charge whatsoever.

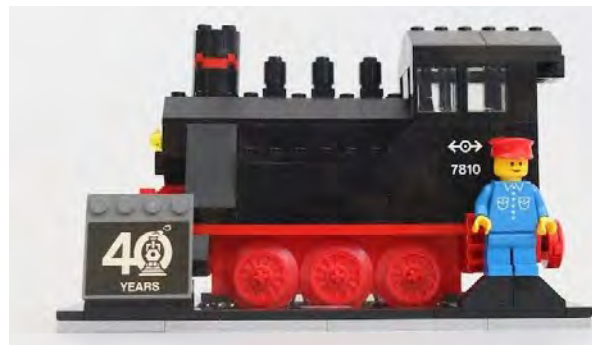
Kindness.

The cons began to fall, after Eastercon it was Enniskillen and Lawless, Satellite all started to cancel, a trickle which eventually became a flood, meanwhile ConZealand was faced with the worst disaster any worldcon had ever known, no con. Not since World War 2 has there been no Worldcon, so that team took the strain, and were in the forefront of delivering an online proposition. The decisions and choices, truly existential for everyone involved, and while cons did go virtual and show it was possible, this was a totally new exercise in management and delivery and at the time when it was go-no-go genuinely new ground needed to be broken. On ConZealand went, and the saddest, damndest moment I have seen in my time of watching Worldcons, was when we watched the video of Kelly and Norm, in Wellington, walking into an empty auditorium. I just cried. No one can understand what they tried to do, what they had to fight against, and what they achieved alt-



though I am certain they felt it, I felt it for them. To work so hard for years and years, to achieve something, and then be faced with going virtual, they did their best. As ever fans were understanding, empathised and supportive. Well most of them.

The post was forever bringing me a smile, and then a Lego Train turned up, I was utterly astonished, how was Mark Slater to know that I had coveted Lego Trains as a youngster, and that I was dead keen on this Locomotive when I heard about it, but was not able to see how I could get it, as it was free with a purchase, and now it turned up. I was so pleased, it went straight into pride of place next to the lightsaber and Bladerunner Whiskey on the display shelf. I was delighted. And smiled.

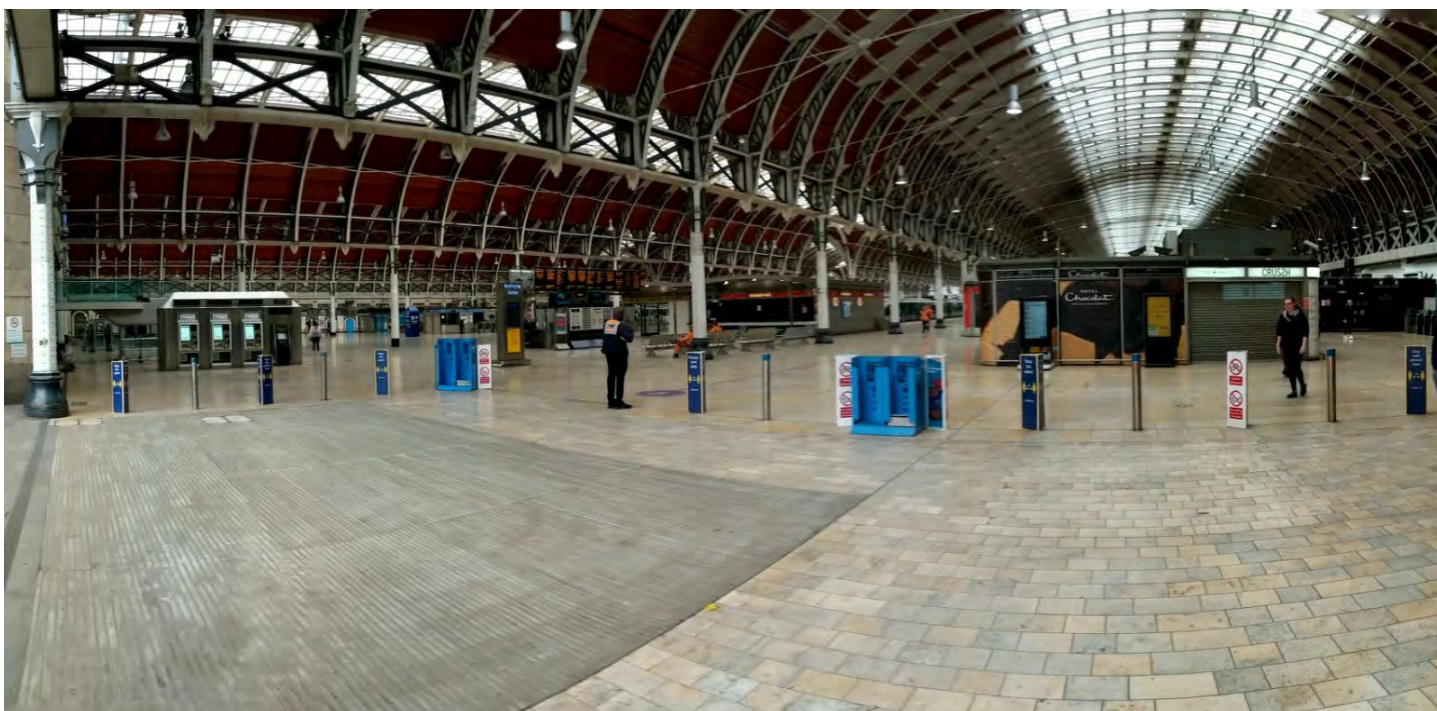


Information is king, writing is fun, and during this time I found myself researching various elements.

Colin Noble a well-known comic book fan, who I had met only in 2019 was the veritable encyclopedia comicana, and I was engaged with him over a number of different comic book things, be it *V for Vengeance* from *Wizard* or *Island of Hate*, which I am still trying to track down (*Battleground #14* from Fame Press 1964) and we corresponded mostly in Facebook Messenger, but also with phone calls. Vic Whittle who has scanned over a million pages of comics, was likewise full of help, and if I had to find something, I could message him and within hours, a scan would arrive showing me exactly what I was looking for, or needed to check. I only met Vic in 2021.

My writing was as ever, varied, and I found fabulous help on an article I was writing about Flann O'Brien and trains. First Nelson Poots of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland was invaluable, I had found an image that I was looking for more information for, and he had guided me, I then went on to write the article and needed to check some things, and he again he was brilliant.

I then was put in touch with Noel Playfair who willingly took a phone call, as I asked him about elements such as 'full shut off' and 'emulsions'. A NIR driver, he also drives the steam trains for the RPSI. He was so insightful, and our conversation was fabulous and I was able to follow up. He was surprised at the literary connection and impressed. I of course was delighted to be able to speak to the last person to drive a particular steam train, and be able to share that experience with expertise, firsthand My researched continued and I found some scans of CIE train consists, by Railway collector and author Jonathon Belmont. I made contact and explained what I was interested in, and he said he might have some documents in an archive that would be of interest, and then the mother load of documentation, all of its era, arrived, timetables, working



timetables, letters to Station Masters, instructions on the consist of trains, services with restaurant or kitchen cars, exactly the stuff I was wanting. but I could never have imagined this level of detail. Sent into the boxes, green and back by the one that was red, entrusted and cherished, carefully transported.

Of course, kindness flows in many ways, and as the summer beckoned and our own plans, looked at first unlikely, and then more likely, we sent out post ourselves, and hope that here and there, wild flowers blossom.

Even though I was working, there was not as much going on sometimes, well sometimes. In one weekend, I dashed across the country moving a Washing Machine and then moving a person's belongings from a storage space that had lost its roof. Not much peril of course, but when they announced they were unwell with a cough, the next day, there were a few anxious days of isolation, waiting to see. Indeed supporting Octogenarians was quite nice but with time in work, I would separate and isolate.

Reading and researching became easier as the weekend crazy was not cancelled. I found an essay about RAF operations in WW2 in Ireland, and his really interested me, especially plans to build run-ways in Ireland, and so I wrote to an RAF Wing Commander, who had written a thesis on the broader subject, and it turned up and then over the weekend

In fairness, post out has expanded exponentially, but also nice to get post in. And I have seen an amazing piece of art in progress this evening that reminds me of Dublin 2019 and then lovely emails from Gary Lloyd. Jayney Mack. And the work with Christopher J Garcia, Paul Trimble, Sara Felix and obliquely with the great Michael Carroll, let alone the many amazing contributors, or professionals giving their time or helping make connections, is unreal.

The post and email was very generous. What began somewhat with Val Nolan and Lynda E. Rucker, in March, and then lads on the *Commando*, *Battle*, *Warlord* and other Facebooks, sent around comics, cheaply or free or swaps and even sent some to unconnected pals, Steven Dean lead the charge on that. In one week alone, comics have showed up, stamps from James Shields, some amazing artwork now on my wall, and more artwork of a character from *Action*. Kerry Kyle sent me some amazing Railway stationery, as well as ephemera, and that was stunning to see, meanwhile, other kindnesses occurred, the Starbuck Mug Mafia worked hard to get mugs, and get them sent about, I sent comics to my niece on demand, only too happy to supply.

Art was always arriving, Sara Felix like an industry in brilliance, and beautiful things turned up, wonderful pieces, stunning, framed or onto the shelf. I found a snake while walking and another living in the in-laws pond, which was exciting and then dug a vegetable patch in the middle of the lawn, because that is what one does!

Charity things occurred, and I won a script, by Garth Ennis, which was quite amazing, and then got to bid for some artwork, again for charity, and that was awesome, the generosity of the artists, and organisation of Paul Trimble, working to improve things for people.

Yet, it has not all been good.

Nigel Poots, Colin Noble, both mentioned in this piece, and John Wyse Jackson, an incredibly brilliant man, writer, editor, and bookseller, left us for the great footplate in the skies. It has been of loss. Their knowledge and willingness to share, are missed, even now, as I contemplate questions I would like answered, but a harder loss for those who loved them.

Covid struck and struck hard, colleagues were especially hit, and that was not good. Yet there was so much kindness, in unexpected communities on Facebook, fans across the world, who were brilliant and kind, and people who just cared for similar things. It was all amazing in such a tragic and terrible time, and it continues, thankfully.





Be Safe

THE BEATLES
SHOULD SUE!



Come Together.
Write Now.

Leacóg Céasta Rinn na gCearn
Rinnagan Crucifixion Plaque,
8th/9th Century 1000objects.ie



Éire

€0.70

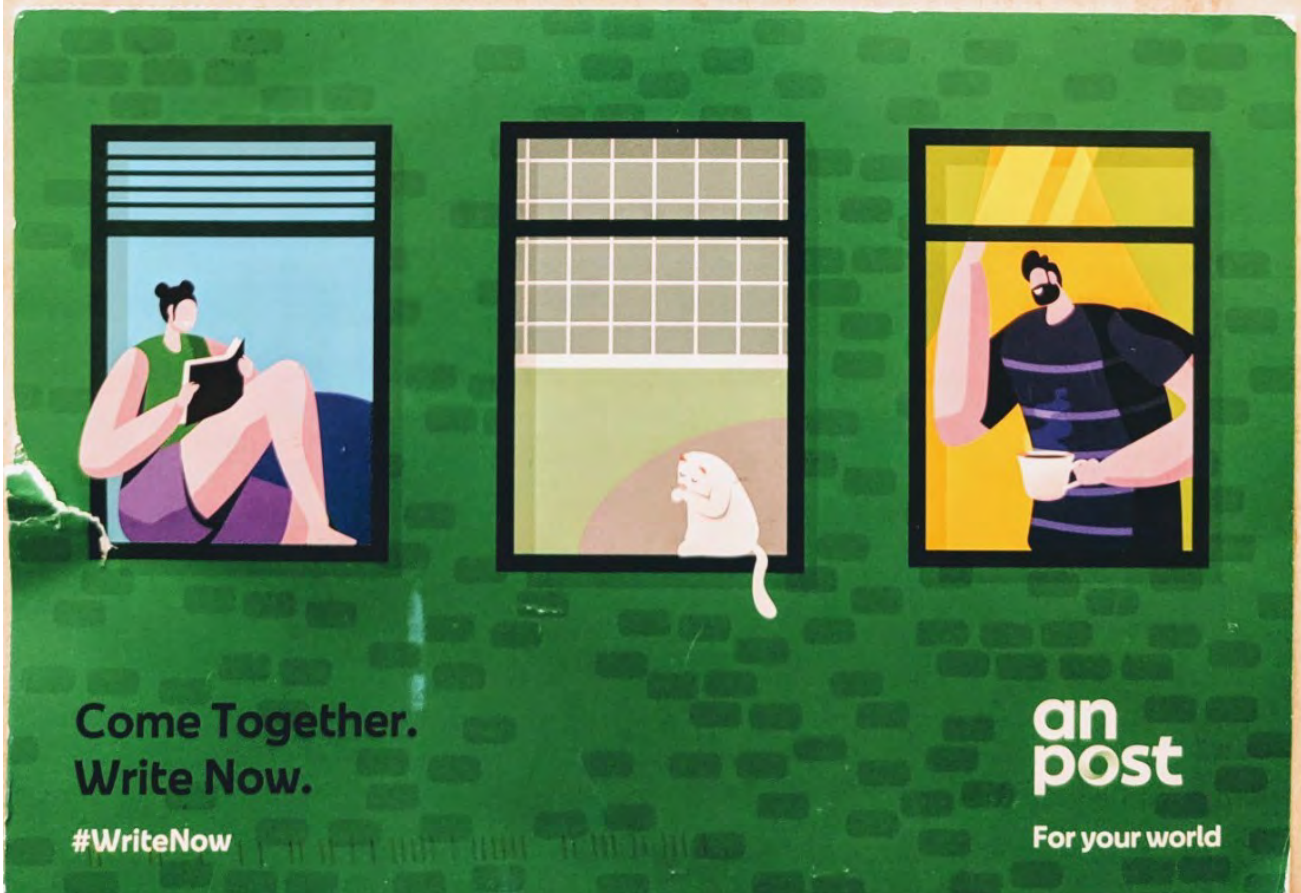
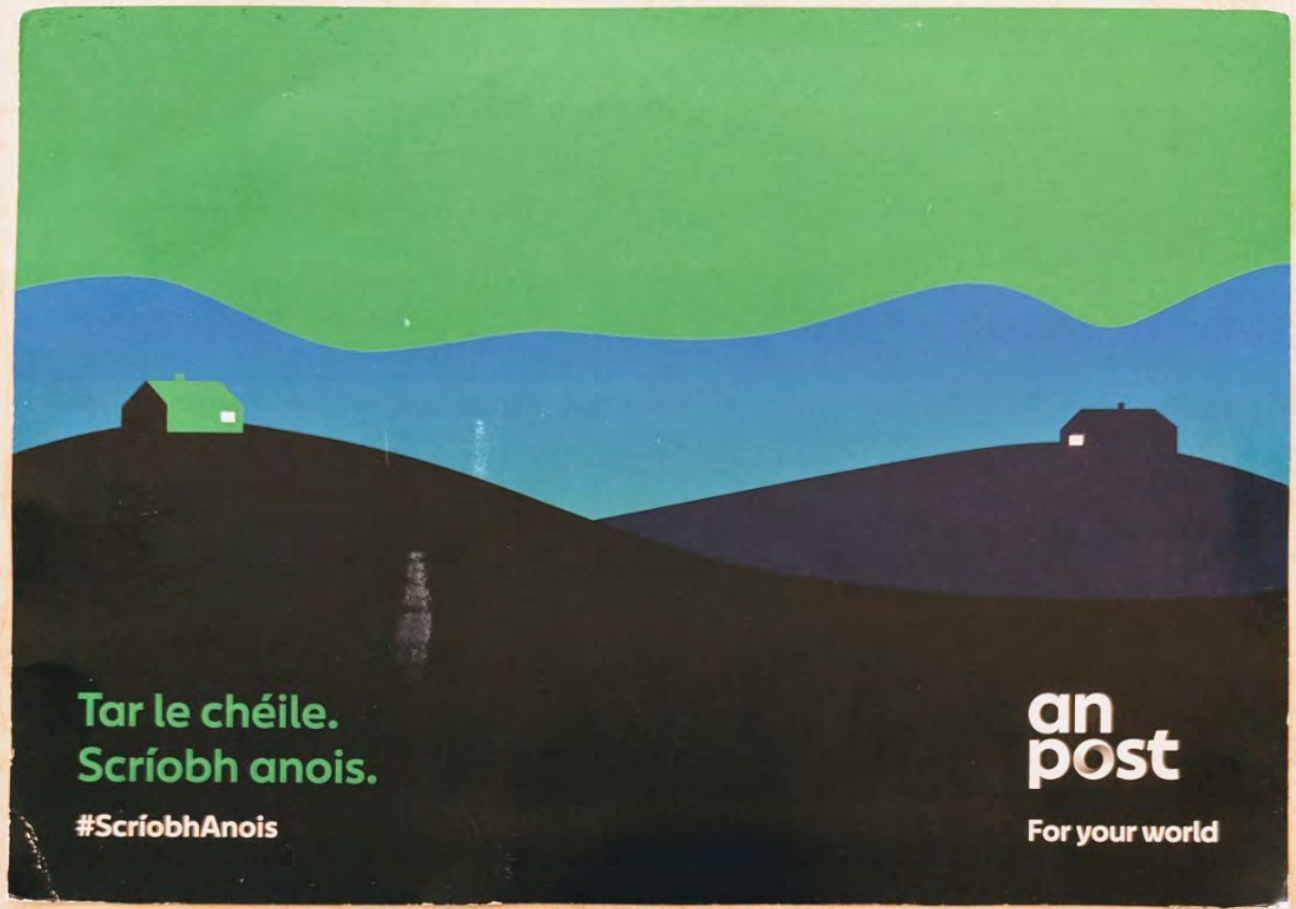
20099

19080105870957 49

post

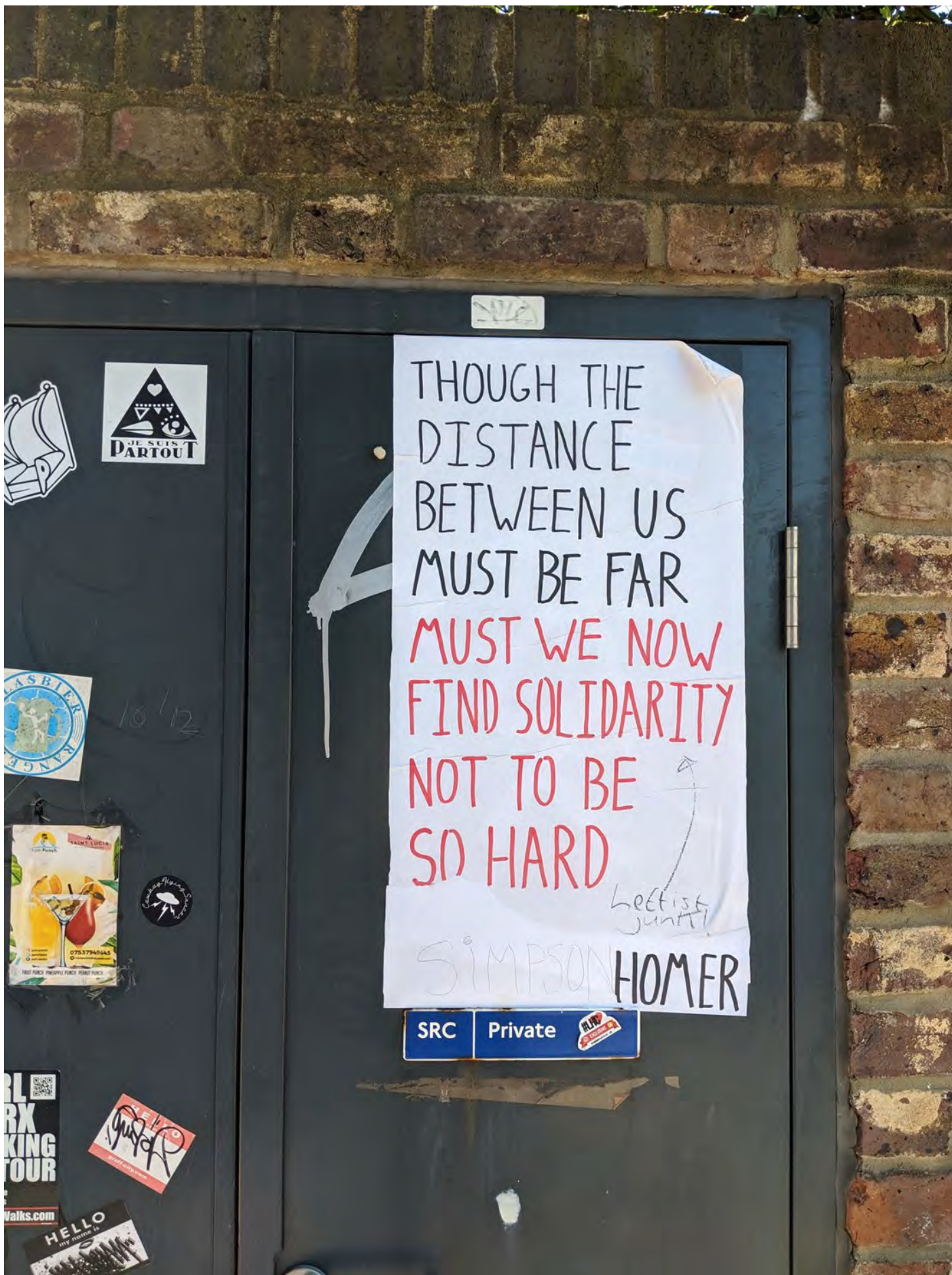
Postas Íochta
Postage Paid

JAMES BACON



Editors Note: As a guy who has been gifted much kindness from James over COVID, I can say it's been one of the most amazing things that my family and I received over the course of COVID. As someone who had it a little easier than most, it's still amazing to not only know that people are out there, but that they care, and most importantly, that they want to let you know that they're out there still. Few days were better over the last few years than getting on of those envelopes, covered brightly in multi-colored images of Queen Elizabeth, the familiar scrawled address, and wishes for Postal safety on the front.





The sky is falling onto me
In a myriad of stars.
The darker winter hours
elevate me high above.
The bullet of my mind travels fast
from the barrel of a gun
leaping time and space.

Photons of the nearest sun
passing through;
I try to grab them with my palm
squeezing tight.
This tingling feeling
as they take parts of me
piercing my being,
scattering my entity,
dispersing my existence
through the cold ink of eternity.

Don't judge the messenger
who brought the news of decay
although your mind cannot conceive Nothingness —
it's here at the end of day

Don't beg — I won't come back.
Let them cross my name
off the lists of those who flew
above the clouds,
with a note: unknown,
no, might have found
something out there
in the fields in the dim rays
of distant barely visible stars.

Only started but the paper
is already stained with tears
of the lighthouse keeper
at the rim of the bay.
Love the messenger
that brings you the meaning
of the beginning and the end
at the edge of the day.

Ann Gry

The Two Portions of Wikipedia I Have Read Most Often

BY Chris Garcia

Amish
preaching
soup
is a type
of bean soup in American
cuisine.

It was
typically
served preceding or
following

Amish
church services.

Some versions
are
prepared with
beans
and ham hocks.

On December 27, 2018,
KTLA Weekend News
anchor and reporter

Chris Burrous

was
found unconscious from
a methamphetamine overdose
in a
Days Inn
hotel room
in Glendale, California.
He was pronounced
dead
at a nearby hospital.

Journey Planet - November 27th, 2021

